She came like the strange wild breath that blows in the forest—a young moose slung beside her

Wyttleton, Edith Joan.

THE LAW-BRINGERS

BY

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"Sons o Men," "The Spur," "The Altar Stairs," etc.

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TO MY GOOD CANADIAN FRIENDS,

DR. HELEN MACMURCHY AND MISS MARJORY MACMURCHY,

I DEDICATE THIS, WITH MEMORIES AND HOPES.

G. B. L

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CHAPTER I.

"TWO WHO WERE FRIENDS."

OVER the firred hill-top. behind the squat freighter's shack the wind came, shouting strongly. It clattered the stiff saskatoon bushes, and thrust at the young poplars until they ran in yellow waves along the crest, and leapt down on the river with a bullying roar that drove the water into startled foam. All across the sky the clouds were reefing, tall as churches, to the westward where the sun lay, like a blot of red paint, on clouds livid as bruised flesh.

There was a moan in the air; an uneasiness, as though Nature was afraid, not knowing why. Down the grey line of the river a loon flew, low and swift. It cried out, turning its bold black head left and right; and the harsh, unearthly sound struck a note of warning to the man who shot round the cotton-wood promontory with the long, tireless, white-man paddle-stroke. He swung the canoe-nose for the shore by the shack and halted, gripping the bunch-grass with a strong hand, and glancing left and right with bold, keen eyes, even as the loon had done.

Up-stream the cut-banks veered in, rough rock and tall earth-faces seamed with forest. Across the river, where the spruces stood, black-shouldered against the west, the wind was stringing wild harmonies such as the seamen know, and in the clearing the yellowed grass sighed and shuddered, over-ripe for the scythe.

The man looked at the shack, bringing his eyes back, step by step, over the grass to the water-lip. Then he came ashore, hauling his canoe after him, and stood upright to fill his pipe. He had read all that the clumsily-hidden grass-trail had to tell, and all that was meant by the clumsily-hidden nose of that canoe in the brush-pile. This was a trap; laid skilfully, but not skilfully enough, for it explained itself to the keen-eyed man as a trap. It explained a little more; just enough to bring a tight smile to the sun-blistered lips as the man lit his pipe under the curve of a well-shaped hand scarred with rough work. This was the end of the long,

stern chase through three full months of storm and sunshine. This was the end, with defiance to the Law in place of submission—and defiance with a solid log-and-daub shack wall before it.

There was not any doubt that he had been watched from the moment when the canoe nosed the sedgy bank of the clearing. The man smiled again, ground the match out under a moccasined heel, jerked his revolver into easy position for sharp work, and walked straight for the shack door with the springy, alert step that tells of the drill-yard. On his shoulders the pale khaki of his tunic had faded to a dirty blurr; one of the black buffalo-head collar-badges, which marked him as a unit of the Royal North-West Mounted Police of Canada out hunting, was missing, and his Stetson hat looked as though it had been slept in more often than his bed for these many weeks past.

His loins were cramped with the canoe-ache and his body dried up with heat. But he walked lightly, with the wind plucking at him petulantly and the sunset flooding into the clearing until the grass seemed to splash away in spurts of blood from his steady feet. And, behind that sagging door and those eyeless windows, the man whom he had hunted so long was waiting him at last. In the Blue Books the one man was down as Reg. No. 4769 Corporal Heriot, R.L., and the other as Samuel Moonias, half-breed, wanted on two charges of murder. But no living soul called Moonias by his first name, any more than they called Dick Heriot by his second, although there were many who used the same terms of disapprobation for both.

Dick's inner knowledge, that special gift to the roving men who guard their lives by head and hand, had put the situation crystal-clear before him. Moonias had a duck-gun only; one loaded with extra-heavy slugs and given to kicking. Moonias believed that Dick, thinking he had come ashore for sleep, would go in, swift and straightly, expecting to catch him unready. Because of these things Moonias would wait for a close shot. One in the face as Dick pushed the door open, most likely. He might try a pot-shot from the window. Chance would have to take care of the other man then. But if it was the door—— Dick leapt the last three feet like a slung stone, splintering the crazy door on its one hinge, and bearing down beneath the wood Moonias and his duck-gun. The exploding charge blew a turf of thatch off the roof, and on the earth floor the two men clinched grimly, dumb, sweating; with the net of death shaken out loosely to catch them, and that unhealthy red of the sunset spurting over wide-bladed knife and revolver-barrel.

The half-breed was brutally strong; but that finer, superber

courage which God gives the gentlemen of His earth when they have absolved themselves from most of the other merits brought the handcuffs round Moonias' thick wrists at last. Then Dick arose lightly; breathed, but civil.

"You put up a good fight, Moonias," he said. "And though it's not manners to resist the Law, I don't blame you. No, not at all. But I do blame you for not seeing the strategic possibilities of that window, though I guessed you wouldn't. Get up."

He went through the half-breed's pockets, nodded, and turned on his heel.

"You likely know better than to try any game with those on you," he said, and the words broke with a yawn. "I think we can do with some sleep, Moonias. I haven't had anv for three nights, and I'll swear you haven't either. That's why you made such a damned bad break in your judgment, maybe. Get right over into that corner."

The breed obeyed, and flung himself down straightway in that animal acceptance of the inevitable which was his heritage. Whistling softly, Dick crossed to what looked like a pile of old feed-sacks in the dark under the window, laid hold of them with both hands, and exploded into a sudden oath that straightened him up with the force of it. Then he stooped again; slid his arms round the man who lay huddled there, and carried him out into the thin slivers of light which were all the low sun sent through the spruces.

The man was dripping with water. His legs left a wet trail as Dick dragged him over the earth floor, and his long arms and bare head fell limp. Moonias stared out of his shock of coarse hair with a sudden eye-glitter.

"Him finish," he said, and the cluck of his tongue was pure satisfaction.

"I wish you were going to be lynched," said Dick unemotionally. "I'd invite every man along the river to mark you. I imagine you're responsible for this, eh? It's probably the Sergeant from Grey Wolf by his stripes. But——"

His voice broke short as he pulled the white face up across his knee in the red level track of the light. Stark river and clearing, and pines blackening in the night changed in a flash to an orchard of bees and apple-blossoms; to a scent of thyme that sickened his memory to this day, and to a girl's sobbing voice saying words that did not hold Tempest's name and that yet were full of Tempest. A cruel look came into his eyes as he stared down on the still face with the short drooped upper lip and the well-set jaw and throat.

"If you married her she made you pay for it, or you wouldn't be here," he said to it. "And if you didn't—was it she who lied, and not you?"

The face gave no answer. The red rays slid off it, leaving it ashen. And then Dick took in his hands the body of this man whose heart he once had known and tended it skilfully; binding the forearm that was broken just below the elbow, and strapping as best he might the flesh that a dead snag in the river had ripped open.

"Spilt out of his canoe, of course," he said. "You have a clean sheet there, Moonias. Unless—did you bring him in?"

The breed grunted. He seemed to feel no hate towards Dick, no interest in the man whom he had salvaged from the river.

"Aha," he said. "But him no gun. No use him."

Dick's brief smile had a little bitter twist to it.

"We are not all so frank regarding the reasons for our actions, my friend," he said, lightly. "Now, if——"

And then Tempest opened his eyes wide and wondering as a child's, and looked up at the man above him. He seemed like one in a waking dream, who hears the ghosts of other years light-heeled about his head.

"The wind is bitter bad across the Barren Lands to-night, Dick," he said. "I saw a wolverine white as a leper just now."

The rowel of memory touched him. He sat up with his brown, sensitive face hardening, and the other looked at him through the mask of amused indifference which hid him when he cared to hide. For a lie lay between these two; high as a woman's yellow head, and unstable as the young love they both had given her. Tempest asked questions, and Dick answered civilly, according to his station. Then he turned his back on Tempest, and walked to the door, looking out. The sun was dead on the livid bowl of the sky and the pale river where the wind blew. His love for the yellow-haired woman had been dead long since. But his love for this man who had trodden the outer trails of the north with him was quick yet; how quick he had not known until he felt the shivering beat of Tempest's heart under his hand just now.

Later, he brought food from his canoe; lit the rusty, broken stove, and spread his thin waterproof mattress and his blanket for Tempest. This was bare duty only because of that extra stripe on Tempest's sleeve. Then, using still the language of passers-by, they lay down; Tempest in restless pain by the stove, and Dick on the threshold, with cheek on arm and his revolver pushed like the nose of a dog into his palm. And beyond their sleeping bodies stretched that great land which had fashioned and hardened them; which had known the tread of their moccasins along the forest-trails beaten asphalt-smooth by the passing of many generations, and had

heard their voices call each other across rivers that had never parted them as the after years had done.

In the morning Dick found a sturgeon-head scow in the reeds, and he went to Tempest, suggesting with colourless civility the advisability of tracking her up river with Tempest aboard.

"She has probably got loose from Pitcher Portage," he said. "Moonias has ripped the side out of his canoe, and you've lost yours. We could freight all we have left on the scow."

Tempest nodded consent. He walked and moved with the crisp strength Dick knew of old, and his eyes were vital, forelooking, despite the pain in them. He was dreamer still; dreaming mightily, as he had once dreamed with Dick in those long-past mornings of life, that the other man would not think of now. But sudden memory of them roughened Dick's easy manner a little as he fitted his breast to the strap that clipped him from shoulder to arm-pit, even as, two yards further along the thin tow-line, a similar strap clipped Moonias.

When the two men had first fallen apart at the touch of the yellow-haired girl, a desperation of pain had driven Dick into more evil than the strait clean work of these latter days would wipe out of his face again. Then he sickened of it; sickened of what the town-cradled men and women could give him. And then, because he had denied all law and all gods in his madness of soul, he chose to fit the yoke of the Law to his neck, and to take his oath to it in the name of God. And after that he did his penance daily.

For the Wild was the only mistress who could ever hold Dick's soul for long, and the Wild had whistled him back to her so many times of late. Whistled him back in the long, far sharp-smelling sedges where the wild duck fly south in thin, black, broken lines, and the red sun sets alone in the silence: whistled him back where Lake Athabaska and the Great Slave roll their stately deep-sea harmonies below horizon; where the rivers brawl, driving their jetsam north to meet the ice; where the snow-tang savours the air with its promise, and the caribou lift their heads, winding man, and the keen wolf-cry drifts over the stilling land.

To-day that haunting, heart-pulling whistle was silent. To-day, when he leaned in the traces as canal-horses lean, side-stepping the rough track irregularly, with the humped shoulders of Moonias before him. All the sun of these last breathless fall days was cast down into the thin gut of the river. The far sky was sick-white with heat. The coulées were brimful of it. Along the mighty web of water-veins that bring blood to Canada's heart it reeled in giddy mirage, and it danced in the clearings like a thing alive. The smell

of heat was abroad on the earth; sharp, clean and resinous in the tang of spruce and jack-pine; warm and dusty in the grass that seeded where a burn had run last year; evil in the rotting weed above the water-line, and strangely intoxicating in the dry breath of forest-fires that made haze of the blue tumbled hills to westward.

Dick stooped as he pulled, taking the smite of the heat on his burnt forehead, and his sweat ran down to the earth, as each tangled loop of river was rounded, and each bold breast of forest slid by. He was tough as the men of the north needs must be; brown, and wiry and spare. But the long months of canoe-work had slacked his leg-muscles more than he knew, and Moonias, setting his untiring pace in the strength of a half-breed nursed on the river, became a living instrument of punishment. But if Moonias was punishment to Dick, the man who trod the thwart of the blunt-nosed scow which left a wake like a liner was hell. For he was What Was, and What Might Have Been, and What Couldn't Be. He jerked into life again memories which Dick had buried with care, and their resurrection was a shameful and unpleasant thing

And Tempest, breasting the sweep through the long hours, had memories too. He was thinking of something which Molson of Regina Barracks had once told him concerning a certain Corporal of E Division who had offended Molson.

"For absolute cold-drawn callousness and impudence you can commend me to him," said Molson. "He has the blackest sheet of any man in the Force, and yet he's the best man we've got on the trail. You can't whip him off it once he has sensed it. He'll go till he's dead—and after. And he knows his worth, and takes advantage of it. Eh? Oh, well; what's the matter with all of his sort? Drink, cards, women—anything at all. He takes his pleasure where he likes, and he's completely indifferent to punishment. We give him all the lone patrol work we can, and he's superb at it. I should imagine he has been pretty effectively through the mill in his time."

"Gentleman, of course?" said Tempest.

"Sure. A lineal descendant by right of spirit from 'the Worshipful Company of Gentleman-adventurers trading with Prince Rupert in the North Seas' in the days when the Hudson Bay Company was born. And he is certainly one of the drift of the world—one of the homeless men."

"We need those men," said Tempest. "They break out the new flags of Empire, and beat the new trails. And die the old deaths when all's done. What's his name?"

Molson gave it. And thereafter Tempest had sat silent as he stood silent now, thinking of the man who had been his friend.

He had known Dick with rather unusual intimacy in the days of their raw boyhood and adolescence, and even then he had known of the inner fastness in the big, humorous, good-looking boy who flashed so swiftly from lazy indifference to a blaze of temper. An inner fastness which he never could penetrate, for all the real love they bore each other. Now, in the light of later knowledge, Tempest wondered if Dick had held that fastness, ashamed and half-afraid, knowing it for the embryo of his future life; the thing which the world was to make him.

He glanced from Dick's tattered tunic in the scow to Dick himself, treading the tracking-step with loose-swung arms and slack hips and head low. Where dried grass was slippery underheel; where branches whipped their faces, and cut-banks broke under their hands; and where the track led them hip-high in the snow-shed water, the two men passed, silent and uncomplaining. Half-breeds live this life six months in the year for perhaps eight years. Then they drop out, crippled and helpless, and the water-ways of Canada forget them, and for them the roaring hotels at the "Landings" and the jovial talk and laughter are gone by. A white man usually suffers in the lines. He is not fitted for them, and the quarter-hour rest every forty minutes does no more than give his over-strained muscles time to stiffen.

Knowing all this, Tempest spoke to Dick at the next halt; choosing his words carefully, as is needful with the man who has been one's friend.

"I fancy we'd best camp on the trail to-night," he said. "The Portage is going to be rather a long stunt for one day."

Dick looked at him through half-shut eyes, and the smile on his lips was unpleasant. He was too tired to allow it to any man—least of all to Tempest.

"You have got the right spirit for the North-West," he said suavely.

Tempest flushed. The golding western light was in his thick, bright hair, and the eager face which no weariness could blurr. He looked curiously vital with the shaggy forehead of the bank behind him in its red and yellow glory.

"Exactly," he said quietly. "I know when we have had enough."

"Ah," said Dick, and the sneer of his smile had got into his voice. "I have heard vulgar men call that knowledge cold feet."

He turned on his heel, with a contemptuous swing, climbed the low bank, and flung himself down in shade of the young poplars and tall raspberry-bushes. But his dark bold eyes were not contemptuous; they were angry, as a man has a right to be angry when forced into contact with [a better

man than himself. Dick had been a drunkard of Life all his days. He had wronged men and fought with them; he had loved women, and wasted the wine of his heritage; and if he had found huge joy in the doing of these things he found little in the remembrance. But Tempest was the same fine gallant soul of earlier years; still climbing his way upward, with eyes lit and hair blown back by the wind of the heights. He had governed himself in wisdom while Dick's temper had governed him as a fool; and the difference lay stark and wide between them now for all men to understand. But the little canker of cynical laughter which lived in Dick's heart came to his aid.

"For though it might frighten him to live with my memories it would certainly bore me to death to live with his," he said; and got up and went down the bank again in obedience to the long guttural cry of the breed. On the beach he found Tempest standing in the traces with Moonias a thicker bulk before him, and he halted, smiling.

"When a man shows he is stung there is generally reason for it," he said.

"Get into the scow and pole," said Tempest quietly. "We're wasting daylight."

"Get out of that strap," said Dick in sudden roughness. "You know you can't pull." And then Tempest looked him between the eyes.

"You're on a lone patrol, my man," he said. "But when you come in contact with your superiors you'll do them the honour of remembering that they are your superiors. Now, get into that scow—sharp."

He fitted the belt to his waist, for the broken arm was strapped over his breast, and trod forward to take up the slack. And in the trace before him Moonias bowed his black bullet head with the groan of a bull. Dick flung himself over the thwart and laid hands on the idle sweep; and behind his amusement at Tempest's moral reproof stood the uneasy knowledge that he was not obeying the superior officer only, but the superior man.

The hour dropped through brief twilight into dark. Sharp bush-scents moved on the quickening chill of the air. Stars opened wide and calm over the forest, laying reflections as calm on the river until the scow burst them into a myriad meteors. Back in the trails a brown bear swung his clumsy way and a red dog-fox flicked like a passing thought. That tense silence which is the essence of sound strengthened as the forest-life waked and walked. In the dusk the crashing of the two men on the bank marked their way. In the scow the third man trod the treadmill step to the sweep. But their bodies were hid from each other even as their hearts were hid.

Past a snake-fence and a clearing three Indian dogs came racing, pallid blurrs like strayed souls on the dark. A white-man's voice roared at them, and a white-man tread came down to the river over the level-laid swathes of hay. And then Dick heard Randal of Pitcher's Portage calling:

"Give us a holt there. My—is that you, Sergeant? Well, I've got a fire an' some grub up to the shack. Turnin' cold, ain't it?"

The scow felt the new vigour of the pull and made a squattering, snuffling haste through the water. Round the bend Randal's home-lights swung in sight, and to Tempest, heavily staggering over the beaten trail, came the vision of what home-lights mean to a man in this land of the last West. For these are very truly the home-lights of Canada; of the mother who breeds and binds her sons from the East to the West and takes into sonship those who come to her from the outer seas. By the naked frame-house on the ocean of prairie she sits waiting; by the lone shack of yellow pine in the Rockies; at the door of the Indian tepee in the forest; at the white tent in the white silence of the Barren Lands. And night by night they come home to her, those sons; going with the tread of tired men across the blowing prairie-grass, stepping sure-foot among the towering glaciers of the ranges, brushing quick feet through the fallen gold of the forest-trails, kicking powdered dust or snow as powder-dry before them out where the trees fail and the winds stand up and scream at the silence and the tent-ropes squeal to the strain.

They come home: to sleep, and to tell of the day's lessons in the knowledge of men who have learnt first-hand in this merciful, merciless great nursery of beginnings which we call Life. And she sits and listens, the mother; heartening the weak, who fear and slide round the edges of understanding, scarifying the cheat in the night when the big lonely places do their talking, giving comfort to the gallant courage that could not win out, and boisterous laughter to the daring men who have stripped themselves naked that they may buy broadcloth and joy of the gambler Chance.

Tempest stood aside with his heart watching those home-lights while the scow was run up, the freight unloaded, and Moonias put into a large shed with a lock and a running door.

"Reckon that'll holt him safe," said Randal. "The linemen kep' all their lumber into it when they was layin' this section. Come right along to the shack."

Over the door-sill Dick trod on something soft that gave, making no sound. Lifted up it proved itself an Indian baby, staring with black, placid eyes and round, pursed mouth.

"Yours?" he asked idly, and saw Randal's eyes go suddenly bloodshot.

"Mine! What d'yer take me for? It belongs to that tepee acrost the clearing. They're e-ternally crawlin' in here, the little beasts—like they was flies—or bugs. Chuck it down, an' let it crawl home."

Dick arranged the baby with its nose in a direct line with the tepee; watched its progress for two yards towards the band of light, then followed into the shack.

The shack was more crowded than most shacks; for, besides the inevitable black stove, narrow bunk, box with tin basin, boots, team-harness, gun, axes, and other necessaries, there was a telephone battery in the north wall and a counter behind which Randal had served the line-camp running east under the window. Outside were some thousand miles of sweeping forest and plain, of river and lonely ranges. Beyond lay big, glowing, noisy towns, where men hived, humming and throbbing with vivid life, and Randal held on to them by the little steel key of the battery. Through the winter he would guard his line-section from fallen trees and snow as best he might. Through spring and fall and summer he would be there; selling tinned foods and cereals and chewing-gum to the line-camps, and taking and transmitting messages concerning the on-going work. And in between he watched half-breed Indian babies crawl into his shack, suck his team-harness in the simple belief that it was moosemeat, and crawl out again. Besides, he chewed a great deal of gum, and passing freighters generally stopped to talk.

Dick kept his eyes from Tempest through the meal of beans and bacon helped out with Randal's sodden bannock. He knew that the man was suffering acutely, and he was glad of it. For hate still held, iron-hard, against the love that had been. Then Tempest got in a corner with his pipe, dropping out of the talk and out of the smudge of light from the dirty coal-oil lamp. Randal sat full in the gleam of it, chewing in slow content. He was like a cow in his great, awkward strength, and like a cow in his indifference to most subjects until Dick chanced on the one concerning which Randal was morbidly rabid. He sat up, thrusting his rugged face forward.

"Who lives in the tepee?" he said. "Who orter live in a tepee but a Injun an' his squaw? An' who do live there but a heathen Russian Jew an' *his* squaw." He flung out a stubby hand where the thumb was blackened by the pipe-dottel. "What right or call have we wi' heathen foreigners in this land?" he said. "Give me the men o' my own breed. They're rotten some, but I know how an' why. I can deal wi' them. But I'll have no dealin's wi' a Russian Jew what's gotten a squaw for wife, an' a bunch o' papooses nasty as hisself. What do we want wi' his breed in our country? What do we want wi' him?"

"We must colonise," said Dick derisively.

Randal sat back with a grunt.

"Colonise be—— What for do we want to colonise wi' the alien for? Why arn't England sendin' us more of her own? By all accounts she's got about a couple or more too many in that London o' hers. Why arn't she sendin' them to us—an' why arn't we waitin' on her?"

Dick spoke with intimate remembrance of some men whom he knew.

"They are not entirely immaculate either," he suggested.

"What o' that? They come o' like blood. You can reckon what they'll do if a man hits or curses them. But the Lord A'mighty couldn't reckon on a Russian Jew—what's gotten a squaw to wife. That Russian acrost there—he took my axe last week, an' I tole him bring it back. Sakes, he had the woman an' kids into that tepee like he thought I was goin' to eat the whole bunch. I don't know how to handle his sort, an' I don't want." Randal spat out of the door; solemnly, reflectively, like one performing a rite. "Give me the men o' my own breed," he said again.

"Does he ill-treat the squaw?" demanded Dick.

Randal shrugged his shoulders.

"Not more'n nat'ral," he said.

"Which means—not more than the men of our own breed." Dick laughed. "Lord knows what the Canadian of the future is going to be," he said. "But he won't be that crawling baby with the high cheekbones, and he won't quite—be you or me. If he has luck he may be a better man than either of us. Where are you going to bed us down to-night, Randal?"

"Sergeant can have the bunk—I reckon he's asleep right now, ain't he? An' you can spread your kit behind the counter. I'm goin' to sleep in the extension."

He nodded and went out, and Dick heard his heavy tread round the shack-corner, among the refuse of spent bottles and tins. It ceased with the slamming of a door somewhere, and Dick crossed the floor to Tempest.

"I'm sleeping behind the counter," he said. "Randal left the bunk for you."

Tempest's eyelids flickered open, but the grey lines round his mouth did not relax.

"Thanks," he said.

Dick hesitated an instant. Then he turned sharp on his heel; walked to his corner, pulled the blankets over him and lay still. But he did not sleep. So much had come and gone since first he and Tempest had answered to the wild winds calling and had swung out with bold forehead against the blast and a careless whistle up the dark fir trail. So much

had gone. Dick watched with wide eyes where, beyond the open door, the light from the tepee died down and out. The night was very still. Stars rode in sight above the pointing pines. The slow talk of the river grew louder. Somewhere one stick cracked as a small night animal sprang to its kill. And either side the shack two men lay motionless, with senses taut with the contact of each to each; knowing the pull and the resistance in each quivering nerve, and fighting it sternly.

And to each man the Voices of the Dark were speaking, and each man was interpreting as loneliness had taught him to do. For those voices can never be understood of the men who walk with the firm shoulder of a friend beside them, or the warm cheek of a woman laid to their own. They sing a battle-song—but it is for the lonely man. They flash light down the long trail, where one pair of feet shall tread. With the deep lancet-plunge of reality they innoculate in man the inevitable lesson—the need for facing life's fires with shut lips and ready hands and Death's grey waters with a jest.

Dick stirred in his blankets with a bitten-off groan. The nightwind was blowing on his face, bringing the smell of warm ash from the tepee-fire. And all the burnt-out souls of tamarac and pine and poplar-sticks called to him from it until the wild soul turned in him and answered. The God who made him vagrant knew why; knew why neither love of man nor woman could hold him, though he gave love—and took it—many times; knew why he must guard the homes of others day and night, with never a home of his own; knew why he should track men down for punishment with clear eyes looking to the day when he should be so tracked down himself.

He writhed on his bed like a man under the knife. But he could not speak. He had wronged Tempest too deeply for that. And then, because it was impossible that Tempest should forgive and come to him, Tempest spoke.

"Dick, old man, would you jam some more wood in that stove? I'm cold."

Dick got up and went out for it in silence. When he came back Tempest was treading through and through the shack with a light step that staggered and failed and went on again under the pressure of tight-strung pain. He smiled at Dick in the wan light from the riding stars.

"Thanks awfully, Dick," he said.

Dick filled the stove and stood, looking down at the red eye that winked at him wickedly. He felt that he could neither go nor stay, and presently the power of that uneven tread pulled the words out of him.

"Did you marry her?" he said, unmoving.

Tempest's walk stopped. Then he said, slowly:

"Do you still think I'm a liar?"

"I—don't know. But I will take your word now if you give it."

"Why?"

The quiet word brought the blood drumming to Dick's temples. He spoke savagely to the red winking eye.

"I don't know. I—guess—because I have forgotten her—an' I haven't forgotten you."

"She married Ted Savile three months after you went," said Tempest simply. "I never saw her again."

"But she loved you. And you loved her."

"Not so much as I did you, Dick."

That silence lasted long. So long that the red eye shut and the yellow tongue below it ceased to whimper. Then Tempest spoke, half-nervously.

"I have heard a good deal about you, Dick," he said.

"Ah?" Dick's tone was lightly cynical. "We are not boys any more. You have heard that, I suppose?"

"Why—I can't exactly say that I've heard you've grown a man," said Tempest; and then Dick faced round on him with drawn lips and eyes alight.

"No?" he said, with a soft bitterness that stung the other. "And yet I fancy I did all a man could do before——"

The little down-slide of the hand told the rest. Tempest spoke sharply.

"A man has never done all he can do till he's dead," he said.

Physically Dick knew that. The men of his kind had proved it with their bodies often enough. But he had stultified his beliefs, and he did not want them roused.

"Oh, my dear fellow; that is as illogical as the rest of our professions. We preach the divine right of free-will, and we spend ourselves in crippling it. We build reformatories and prisons where the fruit of sin may rot because our convictions are not strong enough to allow us to root out the tree. We palter with what we are pleased to call our beliefs because we know that not one of them will stand a direct pull. We recognise that eternally the dog will return to his vomit and the prodigal son to his husks, and yet our civilisation gravely asserts that he would sooner be good. He wouldn't sooner be anything of the kind. Why should he? Inasmuch as man is an individual he possesses individual rights. I recognise that, and yet I earn my living by enforcing the contrary. The whole system of mankind is a pose—an illogical pose, and it is only the divine humour of things which enables us to take it seriously."

"Seriously! My God!" Tempest turned on him with blazing eyes. "You can see life as we of the police see it, and yet talk like that! You know that up through the

whole chaos of the world's history certain ethical rights have been evolving, slowly and painfully, with the actual agony of a soul's birthpangs and the actual sweat of blood. They have evolved because man, as a race, cannot do without them. They have sprung from the flesh and blood of our progenitors even as we have; but because they come from the loins of a race they are too strong for us. We can't break them now. We can only break ourselves if we struggle against them. A man's duty to himself; to women; to the rest of men—there is no imagination left about those things. The soul-sweat of the whole of mankind has gone to the clearing of the position there. We know what we owe to our ancestors and to our posterity. We know what Life requires of us on the broad lines of the physical and mental bases——"

"We, of the police, for instance?"

"Well—we hold a unique position which brings unique responsibilities. We are building directly for the future of a nation, and there can never be anything quite like us again. We do the work of an army, with each division a regiment, and each man a company—and we're barely the strength of a regiment all told, Heaven help us. We are policing the last West of the world, and all the restless men of all the centuries have run West, until they are here, in the last West of all. That makes it necessary enough for us to define and cling to our ethical standards. In all probability we won't have more than fifty years in all for the enforcing of them. Then the Royal North-West Mounted Police is done—not wanted—wiped off the roll of service for ever. And it is for us—we fellows who are doing the cleaning up—to say what sort of record the Force is going to leave behind it——"

"Give the devil his due too," suggested Dick amiably.

"Why; we don't claim to be saints. We're something the world wants more. We're men, doing men's work in men's way. We're men of all ranks and all lives and all lands, and I imagine most of us have got private memories to trouble us when they get us alone on the trails. But we do the work." He stopped suddenly. "And we don't talk about it," he added. "But you—you *know*."

Dick flipped a light finger against his black metal collar-badge.

"Maintien le droit," he said, as though he could read the legend that circled it. "Do you or any other man profess to say that you know what the right is—a man's personal, legitimate right, apart from the law?"

His tone brought the blood stingingly to Tempest's face.

"There was once a man who said, 'Stand fast in the faith. Quit you like men. Be strong.' I can't call to mind any law of the present day which tries to take away our personal, legitimate right to do that."

Dick looked at him in slow amusement.

"You haven't changed much," he said. "You never would remember that there are so many ways for a man to go rotten."

He kicked aside the pile of blankets on the floor, and went out to the night that stirred with waking senses to meet the dawn. The stars were pale. The tall trees were folded close in the hush of sleep. The tread of the coming years passed heavily down the road of the river—years that would see the last fruitful waiting-places of Canada unroll, to lie in the hands of—whom? Dick glanced at the thin strip of pallor that was the tepee. Would they go to the coarse hands of such as that round-eyed baby? Or would the firm, nervous hands of sons born to such men as Tempest take them? And when he and the manner of law which he represented were swept away by the march of time, would Tempest's gathering-call be the word that knit up the centuries?

Tempest's voice seemed to sound it again in his brain: a quiet voice; low, but great with inexorable, unbreakable resolve.

"Quit you like men. Be strong!"

A bird-note drifted thinly out of the heavy timber. The wind of dawn smote the pine-trees suddenly. They swayed and shivered, with their myriad little needles chattering into wordless speech like that of frightened monkeys.

But Dick, taking the chill breath on his forehead, heard what they said; over and over again, with chuckles of laughter.

"There are—so many ways—for a man—to go rotten."

CHAPTER II.

"WE ALL EXERT OUR PULL."

GREY WOLF LANDING ran its one street along the river-edge; a ragged, half-mile street, patched with cotton-wood and poplar clumps and split into sections by the vaguer trails that slid back from it into the forest. One end of the street was flanked by the frame-built Church of England; the other end by the Roman Catholic chapel, and in between lay the reason of Grey Wolf—the story of Fur; of the trapper; of all the big and little four-footed animals that die yearly in the great North-West in order that men may live.

Above the small Hudson Bay Store set sheer to the loose plank side-walk the flag of the red cross and the caribou rampant blew out from the staff as it had blown across all the trackless North-West these two hundred and fifty years past. The sun drew the smell of hot leather and dust and groceries out from its gaping door; mixed it with the smells found in the holes and broken corduroy of the street, and let the idle wind take it forward; past the barracks of the Royal North-West Mounted Police, standing back from their white-washed pickets; past Revillon's Store and the little log-shack where Moore and Holland did their trading, and fling it through the windows over the counter and bottles of Grange's Hotel on a corner lot. Across the street the low bank dipped short to the river, where it breasted big to the Lake. Beyond the river the sword of the frost had touched the forest, so that the trees were yielding up their lives in dripping blood-gouts that turned russet as they dried and fell, leaving the grey limbs gaunt and naked in their yearly death.

The thrill of vigorous, virile life was on Grey Wolf; humming with the soft under-beat of moccasined feet along the planking; ripped through and through with blasts of laughter, and rising to a steady roar where the swarm of nuggetty, sturdy men clustered thickest round Grange's Hotel and the Stores. Brown-faced and eyed, these men; black-haired, with a flash of white teeth, and gleam of gaudy handkerchief or Indian-work belt about the broad hips, and a glint of things that shone on the slouch hat and the moccassins that were

bound with yellow thongs to the ankle. They moved with the swinging tread born of the snow-shoe; they sparred in noisy horse-play, laughing like children, shrilly and often, and in the Hudson Bay Store they drove the two young Ontario clerks to the thin edge of idiocy with their quick-pattered demands in the Cree and Slavi and the Chipewyan French of the outer places.

For they were half-breeds all, from the handsome youth with clear features and haughty head-carriage down through the flat-nosed, slant-eyed Japanese-type to the Indian throw-back, with his black hair, lank either side the raised cheek-bones, and his chin-tuft turning grey. They were the men of the backwoods whose stamping-grounds lay with those of the Indian. They were the men of the trapping-trails, of the silences; the strong men who pitted their flesh and spirit against the white might of the land that bred them; who wrested their right to live from her or yielded her their lives at the call of the river brulés, or the breaking ice or the thin far threads of trail in the forest.

By the river-bank lay the reason which had brought them to Grey Wolf; a long line of scows stretched, each behind each, with noses up; broad-hulled and brown and oily-smelling as whales. An hour back the spaces under the wide, high seats and over the broken decking had been bared of the great square packages of pelts, the year's yield of Hudson Bay furs from the North, tracked by the dark-faced breeds up three hundred miles and over of rapid and river and lake. That sweating journey's end came with Grey Wolf, and the long tin Hudson Bay sheds were shut fast on the warm, close-pressed greasy bales that waited the freighter's wagons and the railroad rattle and the deep-sea ships beyond all.

At the window of the little dark office through the Store end, Leigh, the Hudson Bay factor, was busy. For these short hundred of men had a season's work behind them, rated at something like thirty dollars a month, with board and moccasins added. Round the window they shouldered each other, good-natured, grinning and awkward; reaching hard, rough hands for the dirty bills that made half their pay, and for the order which gave the rest in trade at the counters. Then they surged back to Hotchkiss and Lampard, swamping their substance in such things as the light, coarse tobacco which filled every pipe, and fine-tooth-combs, and scents, and blue and red and purple satin ribbons. Tommy Joseph had a place of worship on the counter, with legs swinging and hat thrust back from the broad, grinning face. For Tommy Joseph had brought in a silver-fox skin from the spring hunt before he went North, and the hundred-dollar worth of it lay in his thick hands now. Beyond the door

and the reek of smoke and the noise loitered two half-breed girls, tall and sinuous, with the swarthy beauty that fades with such swiftness. Two-young-men laughed, rolling a length of purple satin between his sweating palms and stuffing it into his hairy chest.

"Florestine, she laike vous retournez, Tommy," he said, and Tommy slid off the counter with sheepish defiance on his shining face.

"S'pose you donnez moi de perfume—dat stinky-stuff," he said, pointing; and Lampard brought down a gaudy, gold-topped bottle of Jockey Club.

"I taike dat," said Tommy Joseph. "T'anks beaucoup." He swept the change into his trouser-pocket and the bottle into his jumper, and sprang out into the tide that was setting towards Grange's Hotel. Little Beaver nodded slowly.

"Me t'ink Florestine she please you tell Tommy," he said.

"Bien," said Two-young-men, shrugging. "Florestine's man he not say t'ank, mebbe. You t'ings in de scow yet, Louis?"

"For sure," said the young breed, and shouldered his way out and through the crowded street to the river. Here a few men slept in the smell of tobacco-smoke and bilge-water, and a breed with huge rounded shoulders was shouting up the bank to a white boy.

"Slicker! Are Ducane come in yet?"

The white boy looked down with eyes that were startlingly blue in the sunburnt face, and finished his whistle through to the end. Then he said:

"Were you speaking to me?"

The breed's heavy face went purple. In law he classed as a white man, and he had white relations.

"What d'yer think?" he said savagely.

"I thought you were," explained Slicker blandly. "But I guess you've got my name wrong. It's Warriner—H. G. Warriner."

He turned and strolled off, and the breed came up the bank with red flecking his little eyes. Slicker heard him cross the street and shout through the mob of men round the bar-door:

"Ducane! Any feller seed Ducane?"

"Slicker!"

The boy's whistle broke sharply. Then his brown face lit up.

"Hillo, Tempest," he said. "These fellows will be going some soon."

"Why, certainly. They've been dry for six months, and they've got to get rid of their pay before they pull out again. Seen Ducane?"

Slicker's cousin happened to be married to Ducane. But this was no matter of pride to Slicker.

"Why should all the world reckon I carry Ducane around in my pocket?" he demanded. "I'm sick of the name of the brute. Robison was asking for him just now."

"Slicker!"

"Now, what in the nation——" Slicker wheeled and looked into the eyes of Ducane's young wife. "You're the third man to-day who has asked me where Ducane is," he said. "And I don't know. I don't know. I don't——"

"But I never asked you."

"But you were just going to. You can't monkey with me, Jennifer."

Jennifer laughed, glancing at Tempest where the light struck on him from the broad-brimmed Stetson hat down the straight-run body to the light spurred boots.

"He told me to bring the rig over for him this afternoon," she explained. "I left it in the Hudson Bay yard. But if he is in there——"

She nodded towards the hotel with her small, delicate face troubled, and Slicker patted her shoulder. Ducane was J.P. for the district, but men had no occasion to honour him therefore.

"I'll go hunt him out for you, honey. It's no place for you. I'll get him."

He loped over the dusty road and in through the doors where a cluster of breeds showed black as bees on the comb. Tempest turned, keeping step with Jennifer, past the barracks where blew the flag that spoke the law of the English to the solitudes, and round the little post-office, into the Hudson Bay yard. He knew Ducane as it was his business to know men, and he knew small good of him. The man had that big, blustering way of mind and body which so many women mistake for manliness and so many men do not mistake for something else; and since he had brought his month-old wife to Grey Wolf three short weeks ago Ducane had not improved to any noticeable extent.

Jennifer patted the pony; cuddled it, and kissed its nose, investing each movement with that quaint and delicate charm which made men forget her lack of beauty and remember her. Then she laughed up into Tempest's grave eyes.

"Come back to supper. I'll make you some corn-cake," she said.

"Sorry." Tempest did not smile. "I fancy I'm needed here to-night. Too many trackers about. Why, no—I don't imagine there'll be trouble. But I must be on deck. The other men are away."

"Your arm is just out of the sling. If any of them——"

"They won't. Besides, that's what I'm here for." He laughed now. "I am not scared," he said.

"Well, of course—a man never is," she said.

Tempest had put Ducane sick with fear once already. And he expected to do it again. He gave place to Slicker with relief.

"Honey," Slicker slid an arm through Jennifer's. "You'll have to let me drive you home. Ducane will be late—business, you know. He won't be back to supper, and he sent you his love."

Slicker's imagination was responsible for this last. His boy-face was hard about the jaw, and, in the vernacular, he "put Tempest wise" with a flicker of his left eye-lid. Tempest unhitched the halter and stowed it under the seat in silence.

"That's good of you, Slicker, dear," said Jennifer tremulously. "But poor Harry does so hate the hotel meals. He says they're horrid."

"I feed there, and they haven't killed me yet," said Tempest cheerfully. But his face was grave again as Slicker swung the rig down by the river to the grey haze of forest where the sweet-scented blanket of hill-fire smoke clung. Then he went back swiftly, with his scarlet tunic making a bright blot among the dark-shawled women squatted on the side-walks, and the clustered loafing men in their dingy store-clothes.

The knot round the bar-door gaped to let him in and closed again. Their broken vivid speech came to him full of the North. For to the men of "inside" the North-West is the world, and kingdoms and captains may fail and parliaments run to red ruin unheeded so long as the rabbits which feed the lynx swarm in their thousands, and the running record between Fort Smith and anywhere else is won by a man whom other men do not hate over well.

Drifted scraps concerning a bear-trap that broke, a man who made no fur, little Marguerite who "vas si belle von taime," and Jack Audoine, the breed who portaged a loaded scow up the Rapids of the Damned; rivulets of talk in the Indian dialects, with the whole pock-marked by such familiar words as Mackenzie River, Fort Resolution, and Good Hope, were as familiar to Tempest as the smell of the river-wetted clothes and the moose-skin moccasins; of whiskey, and heated men, and the strong, light, coarse tobacco.

He crossed to the counter that ran up the north side of the big bare room, and spoke to the bar-tender.

"Have you seen Mr. Ducane anywhere, Jimmy?"

"Why—he's up to the balcony wi' Robison, Sergeant. I guess they're talkin' some. They've sent for drinks twice."

Tempest leaned over the bar.

"Not had any trouble yet, have you?" he said with dropped voice.

"Not a mite." Jimmy screwed his eyes up, looking round the barn-bare place, where the dark breeds dozed half-fallen on the benches, or smoked stolidly with spittoons between their moccasined feet, or talked in twos and threes with the picturesque hand-movements which often make half the speech of men who have lived among the Indians. Jimmy nodded.

"Pretty as a Sunday-school," he said. "We'll likely have a few muzzy to-night. You wouldn't want to be hard on them, Sergeant? They're as good a bunch of boys as any along the river."

"Don't let them get too gay, then," said Tempest, and went through the inner door and up the wide uncarpeted staircase, seeking Ducane.

Grange's Hotel was the only one in Grey Wolf. The only one "inside"—which is to say, north of latitude fifty-six—along these water-ways. It carried the distinction of its position, and of not much else just now; and Tempest, turning along the upper landing, looked on the bare rooms and tumbled beds with an indifference bred of familiarity. They were for the men of the trail, these places; surveyors, prospectors going through to the ore-beds of the north; traders on their home-way to another five years "inside"; the men of the Treaty Party, perhaps, or those who took the long patrol with the Judge who happened to pass Grey Wolf in his yearly round. But they were for men only. Few women travelled that trail which men's feet found difficult at times, and those who passed it were chiefly of the pioneer class; brave-eyed, hard-handed women, trekking with their home and their children and their husbands into the loneliness, and sleeping at night with the tent-peak and the stars above them.

The ring of Tempest's spurred feet along the balcony jerked Ducane out of his stooping, muttering talk with Robison. He flung himself back in the creaking chair and bawled out the jovial greeting which Tempest knew to be false as the man himself.

"Hillo, Sergeant, hillo. We were just talking about you; saying you'll want to keep the lead sounding to-night, eh?"

"I don't expect any trouble," said Tempest, sitting down. "They are good boys all right. And drunkenness is one of the honest sins up here. It seldom hurts more than the drinker."

Tone and words were casual enough, but Ducane shied from them uneasily. Tempest had a way of making his personality felt where he went, and there was much in Ducane's life which

would not bear the inspection of those clear eyes. Robison grinned. He was long-armed and hairy-chested as an ape, and he had all the ignorant, resentful, cunning courage of an ape.

"Never thought such as you'd say as there was honest sins, Sergeant," he remarked, and Tempest smiled, lighting his pipe.

"That is a social problem, I suppose. But when it comes to a question of degrees of evil we must discriminate. I fancy Ducane will agree with me that a drunken breed may very often do less harm, morally and socially, than many a sober white-man."

Ducane's bloated, handsome face reddened. Tempest's casual sentences had a way of dropping straight into the well of a man's mind to trouble the waters.

"Oh, I guess all human nature is tarred with the same stick, more or less," he said. "We can't all be plaster saints, Tempest, or you'd be out of a job. But in lots of cases bad men sin and worse men talk about it. Those that like the taste of it on the tongue, and yet are afraid of the fires on their skin. Not going, are you? Robison was just telling me about some land he'd bought near Grande Prairie."

Robison was trader and trapper in a small mysterious way of his own, and of late he had become farmer also. He launched into vernacular technicalities which Tempest listened to idly. He was thinking of Ducane at present, and of Ducane's young wife.

He supped with Ducane later in the big dining-place where clerks from the trading-offices, a few half-breeds, and a score of men more passed and passed again, fed at the little tables, joked with Grange's good-tempered half-breed wife, and watched, shyly or boldly, according to their kind, the two white serving girls who bore the stamp of town-life on them still.

Tempest came out at last from the noise and light to stand in the pallor of the dreaming night. Beyond the street lay the huge silent scows, emptied at last of the sun-warmed, close-pressed furs. Behind were the men who had warped them up, foot by foot, by the long-laid, mysterious water-trails of the North, and who would so soon seek their own again among the winter woods with the light patter of moccasined feet sounding along every nerve and fibre of the chilling land. It was part of the routine—like life, and death, and sleep, and all else, and it meant as little to the men who did it as these things mean to the most of us. But to Tempest something of the wonder of the need for it all came restlessly, and he spoke without turning to the man whose lagging footsteps had followed him out.

"I'm going home, Grange. You'll know where to send if I'm wanted."

Grange giggled. He was a little nervous man with a great love of his many children, and of Moosta, his half-breed wife.

"Sure, Sergeant, sure. But I reckon we ain't got much hot stuff ter-night, barrin' Robison." He jerked his head towards the bar. "They're on'y singin'," he said. "My, how that Pierre Dupuis kin drive the chune."

Tempest knew what make of men comes of French-Indian blood. He knew of the occasional cast-back to the vices of each; of the irresponsible temper flung to fury from laughter before the white man can take heed; of the frank, childish nature, which brings men to heel like eager dogs before the voice of authority. He nodded.

"Well, don't forget to let me know," he said, and went down to the lonely barracks with the deep-throated swing of the song welling up to the stars above him, and all the soft, purring murmur of wooden dwellings settling into the hush of sleep after the day's heat sounding through the clearing.

Two hours later he found that Grange had not forgotten, when young Forbes, a green English boy in Revillon's Store, burst in on him with gasping breath and starting eyes.

"Pile out—quick, Sergeant," he said. "Ducane and Robison are killing each other."

Tempest distanced the boy back up the silent street and over the flapping boards that made a following rattle like musketry in the hills. He thrust between the half-breeds who clustered thick round the door, and saw the two men who struggled breast to breast, knee to knee; the white face livid with fury and fear, the dark face like a bursting plum.

The quarrel had been born in a flash, and the end of it was likely to be as swift; for Robison had his knife out as Tempest jumped forward with his lithe finish of movement, and gripped each man by a shoulder.

"That's enough," he said, and his voice carried through the noise. "Quit! Sharp!"

The men were blind and deaf with the wrath that held them. Ducane wrenched away Robison's knife with a quick wrist turn, and then Tempest's face was thrust in his with eyes blazing like the flash before the bullet.

"Quit!" he said only. But the threat behind the word drove terror into Ducane.

He fell away, dropping the knife, and Tempest flung himself on Robison. The breed was too big and too heavy for him; but he would not have called for assistance when he did if a sudden demon of mischief had not lit the idea in his brain. Robison was a malignant hater, and there was no man in Grey Wolf would have cared to bring himself under the

harrow of that hate undesired. They stood back, waiting on Tempest's call. And when it came it hit the only man who did not look for it.

"Ducane," shouted Tempest. "Lend a hand here."

And Ducane it was, half-sobered and sick, who helped pinion the big breed and guide his resisting feet down to the barracks, and into the little cell with its grinning grating on the whitewashed wall. Then Tempest shut out the approving crowd, who had followed; settled his tunic-collar where a top hook was burst off, and looked at Ducane.

"You'd best sit down and get your breath," he said. "I want to hear some reasons why you shouldn't be in right alongside Robison."

The heavy red flooded Ducane's skin.

"You forget who you're speaking to," he said.

"I'm likely to forget it when a gentleman brawls with half-breeds in a public bar," said Tempest. "Is there a shack or a tepee up or down river won't have that news inside a week? We are teaching them to respect the white man in Grey Wolf."

His level words bit like serpents' little tongues. Ducane came to his feet unsteadily, taking hold of his blustering courage.

"You rather exceed your duty," he said. "I was preventing Robison from assaulting a breed. Good-night."

Tempest let him go. He had more work to do, and before morning the half-dozen cells were full with the frank and ordinary cases of a pay-night. For in one night, or two, these cheerful men of the child-heart had to "blow in the wad" of a year's work ere they faced to the trail again. Such was custom; and Tempest, knowing, tempered the wind to the shorn lamb in so far as he honestly could.

There were mild fines and reproofs in the little court-room next Tempest's bedroom in the morning; and then, hour by hour, Grey Wolf slacked her sinews again, lying inert until the next cataclysm of life should burst on her. The fringe of it came three evenings later, when Tempest rode home, on the bob-tailed cayuse known to all his world as Gopher, and found the little steamer from Lower Landing backing noisily into the stub-end of wharf. All the population were out to make remarks, and Tempest added his in amaze.

"But how the deuce did you cross the rapids, Mackay?" he said. "They couldn't track the scows further, for she's closing so unusually early this year. You'll never get back."

The brawny Scotchman laughed, reaching a hand over the rail.

"Listen till I tell ye," he said. "I wadna hae daured bring her, but Harris swore I couldna. He swore it in com-

pany, ye see, an' I waur bound tae gie him the lie." His heavy shoulders shook with his rumbling laugh. "Every dommed pund o' freight I tracked over those rapids in York boats," he said. "An' I go back by trail. The 'Northland Flower' is sleepin' in that backwater for her winter bed, an' I thought more than aince she'd be sleepin' on the rapids. It waur sure enough close skatin'. But the fairies was wi' us." He lit his pipe, and jerked the match overboard. "Ha' ye heard tell that Tom Saunders is tae pu' out East for good?" he said. "What div ye mak' o' that, now?"

"Cold feet, perhaps. Marriage, perhaps. But he'll break his neck breaking horses some day before long."

"The wildest o' us slack oop when we mairry," remarked Mackay. "'Cept Ducane. I hear things about him. Things as you don't hear, ye ken. In the nature o' life ye have to go around wi' your ridin'-lights up."

Tempest dropped his whip lightly across Gopher's crest.

"Come in and have a smoke up this evening, Mackay," he said only. But Mackay winked long and slowly after the cloud of dust.

"And do ye think that Ducane will hold any course straight enough for you or me to catch him on it, Sergeant?" he said.

In his office at the barracks Tempest opened his mail; read a part, and then sat still for long, very long, until the notices and memorandums, and the few photographs on the opposite wall were a blur, and Poley, the old red-bearded cook, came in with the lamp.

Tempest roused himself, and his eyes were strange as the eyes of a man who has been seeing what he did not think to see again.

"Is Baxter in?" he said. "Send him to me, then."

There was dislocation and promotion of which to speak to Baxter. Then he leaned forward and grasped the man's hand.

"I congratulate you—Sergeant," he said, and smiled. "You should have had this step last year, for you've deserved it long enough." He looked away. "Your marching-orders come with it," he said. "But they've managed a good leave for you first."

Baxter's rough hands shook a little where he knuckled them down on the table-edge, and his rough voice was not quite steady. He was Canadian born, even as his fathers were, and he served his land simply and directly with all his simple powers.

"Ah!" he said, and the weight of his soul seemed to lighten with the breath. "I guess I can drive that horse, Sergeant. An' I don't mind tellin' you now—there's a little girl—she's waitin' six years—I guess maybe if they put me south she won't want to wait no longer!"

Tempest gave no answer. Baxter looked at him sharply; lost colour; spoke with suddenly thickened voice.

"Where have they put me at? Where? Not Herschel?"

Then, before Tempest's face, his own sagged and grew gray.

"God," he said in his throat, and sat down, and looked out straight before him with still eyes.

Tempest moved his papers with quiet hands. He had come sane and whole from the searching test of that last, loneliest, most terrible post of all which the North-West offers her children: Herschel Island on the rim of the Arctic Ocean; where the sun lies hid, and almost hid, a half year through; where the desolation and the silence take hands and walk together over the untrod snow, and the Northern Lights chase each other with curious shapes and silky noises across the great black cup of the sky. Tempest had taken his trick at that wheel, and had come from it unharmed. But he was a younger man than Baxter, and he had more education to teach him self-control. Besides, there had been no little girl waiting for him.

"I can represent the case at head-quarters if you like," he said. "But you know we're short of men. We always are."

Baxter nodded; cleared his throat; cleared it again.

"Sixteen years I've been in the Force," he said. "And never a word against me, Sergeant."

"I beg your pardon."

Tempest had answered tone rather than words, and Baxter nodded again.

"Granted," he said. Then, "over two years, isn't it?"

"Officially two. Nearer three, allowing for travel and change of seasons."

"I've got till ice goes out in spring," said Baxter, and his eyes lit with longing. "I could marry her right now—an' leave her again. I couldn't take a woman up there?"

"No," said Tempest. "You couldn't take a woman up there."

Baxter's knotty hands stirred and grew still again. He looked out at the blur beyond the window where an unseen child was laughing. Tempest's sympathy showed in his silence, and Baxter stood up at last.

"Thank you, Sergeant," he said; halted, and added, grim and slow: "I guess I can't marry her. Herschel an' the North have done up better men than me."

"You're judged fit, or they wouldn't send you. There have been no excesses in your life for you to fret over, Baxter. You'll get along well. There are two more in the detachment, you know, and it is seldom that some of the whalers don't winter there."

Baxter looked at him.

"As man to man?" he said. "It gets hold of one? That having dark at daylight, as you may say—and seeing nothing half the time but those Esquimaux with their long tails trailin' —and letters once a year. And the knowing, maybe for months at a time, that there's nothin' between you and your God—nothing white, but the two-three men with you and the snow. It gets hold of one? As man to man, Sergeant?"

"It does," said Tempest quietly. "And yet you can stand it, Baxter."

"If you say so, Sergeant. You've got all your senses, right enough. But—I don't know. I don't know."

"You do know," said Tempest, and his voice rang suddenly. "There won't be more asked of you than a man can stand. And you are a man."

"I should hope so. Well," he shook himself. "Let her roll into it," he said. "When do I go out?"

"On the York boats—Barney's gang, to-morrow. The new man is riding up now."

"Quick work. But, of course—with the ice coming an' all. Who's the new man, Sergeant? Been this way before?"

"He has been all over. But he comes from Macleod. He has lately been promoted Corporal, and his name," Tempest's voice altered slightly—"his name is Heriot; R. L. Heriot."

"That'll be Dick Heriot, I guess. Can ride most things that have two sides to 'em, folk say. I've heard o' him."

Tempest had heard of him also, although it was not necessary to say so. For two days he hid the trouble in his eyes; but when he met Dick the shadow was lifted.

"What are we going to do?" he said. "We have always run together before. Are you strong enough to obey me, Dick?"

"If you're strong enough to make me!" said Dick, and laughed.

"By——, I'll make you," said Tempest. "But it's a poor look-out for the Force if I've got to make you, old man."

Dick moved restlessly. The pull of this man was on him again, and he knew that he would resist more than he gave to it all the days of his life. For the good which he could see and reverence was greater than the good which he wanted to do.

"I guess you'll whittle me into my hole," he said. "But I'm hard wood. I'll break your knives."

"I don't want to whittle you," said Tempest, staring out with his head between his hands. "Aren't you man enough to do it for yourself?"

Dick laughed and walked to the window.

"Lord, yes," he said. "I've whittled myself slab-sided. I've whittled my soul out and put a whiskey-peg in its place. I've loaned my youth where I didn't ought, and I've run up accounts which I don't mean to settle. But you'll make me pay with usury, you old fox. I know you, Tempest."

"I hope so," said Tempest. Then his voice changed. "But I believe that you're a better man than you pretend to be," he said.

"It's not his beliefs which trouble a man," said Dick. "It is the making folk believe that he believes in his beliefs." He wheeled suddenly, and faced Tempest. "The clinkers that we take out of the engine-fire can't burn again," he said. "I've wanted to be a clinker more times than once. On my soul, Tempest, I don't imagine a thing could ever get hold of you as it gets hold of me."

Tempest still stared at the blurr of window-pane through which Baxter had looked on his future.

"God knows I don't want to judge any man," he said. "But this would be a simpler world if each were responsible for himself only."

Dick whistled softly between shut teeth.

"According to the tenets of common-sense we are," he said. "But what a rotten thing is common-sense. A man doesn't rule himself by it half his days. And when he does he generally gets up to the neck. You leave me alone all you can, Tempest. A man can shoulder the rest of the world—but he can't shoulder his friend. His heart gets in the way there."

Tempest left the matter at that, and went over in the next afternoon to see Jennifer. He had developed a habit of going to see Jennifer when his work called him in that direction, and this day he found Slicker on the table in the little sitting-room eating the last half-dried saskatoons from the hill out of a shining tin pan. Jennifer was in the window-seat with that cheerful busyness of work about her which reminded Tempest of long ago home-days. The red of a late fall sunset was behind her, sharply distinct on lake and sky, on hills and marshy foreground; and the red of it was in the rough ends of her cloudy hair which glowed until they called a witticism from Slicker.

Jennifer was unabashed. She bit off an end of thread with her sharp little teeth.

"I suppose you can't help being clever any more than Mr. Tempest can help being good," she said. "It must be an awful handicap to you both."

"It is," admitted Tempest gravely. "Especially when you're the only one in the bunch."

Slicker chuckled with his mouth full.

"That's one on to you, honey," he said. "But we can't

help it. Some are born with cold feet, some get cold feet, and some have cold feet thrust u——"

"Slicker, if you bring your vulgar jokes over here, I'll lock you up. I know you're in a position to tell us why both acquirements are a handicap, Mrs. Ducane, but——"

"Tempest considers each of his good deeds as an asset placed in heavenly securities to act as retainers when the time comes to need an advocate," explained Slicker. "You won't convince him, Jennifer."

"You see, Slicker has tried," said Jennifer. "That is what makes him so contemptuous. We are never really contemptuous of things till we find out that we can't do them. Slicker tried for a month. That was down East, when he thought of going to China for a missionary. He was so affected. I spilt boiling water into both his shoes one day—with his feet in them, and he only said, 'Oh, dear!' Now, he should have said 'damn,' shouldn't he? All white men say 'damn.' Kipling calls it 'the war-drum of the English round the world.'"

"I—I think he expressed it a little differently," suggested Tempest. "But no doubt he meant much the same thing."

"Of course," said Jennifer.

She drew a ragged sock over her hand; held it up to the light, and cocked her head at it.

"When Providence made me your cousin, Slicker," she said, "it neglected to tell me what you were going to do with your clothes. Otherwise I might have declined the honour. This is the seventh pair of holes you have brought me to darn socks on to in one week."

"But you look so sweet when you're doing it, honey." Slicker tipped the tin for the last of the berries. "You make a regular little home-bird twittering in your pretty nest—and I never reckoned there'd be anything but a bonfire made out of this old place in Ducane's time."

Jennifer laughed and flushed with the consciousness of her young wifehood, and again Tempest's face was troubled as he looked at her. As yet there was no flaw in the warp and woof that Life was spinning her. But it must come soon. It could not fail to come, and the snarl might be such that no patient fingers and no brave eyes that kept the tears back would unravel. It could not fail to come. He knew Ducane too well for that, and he knew Life too well.

The dread of grim tragedy broke before the indefinable sensation of something tense in the air. He turned from the window to see Slicker with a saskatoon between thumb and finger, regarding Jennifer very much as he might have regarded a chick which had just emerged from a duck's egg. The light from without struck one side of Jennifer's small face and the

blurr of copper hair as she leant forward, speaking with that soft, quick voice which was characteristic of her.

"*You* don't know! How should a boy like you know what it means to lie awake at night and feel that you have got into the heart of things at last—the real core—right back to the beginning where men stood with bare feet on the bare earth, as it were—"

Slicker removed his eyes to his sock.

"I've stood with bare feet——" he began. Then he looked at Tempest. "Isn't she the most surprising thing that ever happened?" he said.

Jennifer swung round. Her eyes and hair glowed in the light.

"Out here men *do* things," she cried. "It is the land of romance and the real picturesque. Here one can believe—and do. It's like coming out of a novel and getting into history. It brings out all that is brave and good and noble in men and women. Look at those women at the English Mission, making Christians of the little half-breed children! Look at the Mounted Police scouring the land with their old khaki uniforms, year in and year out, to enforce the law! Look at the half-breeds submitting themselves to that awful labour of tracking, season by season. Look at men such as my Harry, battling for his home in the wilderness, just so that he can make some woman happy——"

Slicker swallowed his berry with the air of one who needed some support.

"Maybe a girl who can see her back-hair in a hand-glass without getting lock-jaw isn't fitted by nature to look at life straight," he said. "You get Miss Chubb down at the Mission to tell you if she hasn't reason to consider that she's done her possible by the race if she can teach them to put their clothes on to the right parts of themselves and to blow their noses. And you ask Tempest right now how long it would be before an M.P. got acquainted with the inside of his coffin if he attempted to scour the land with an old uniform or anything else without letting up for meals. And the breeds wouldn't take another job if you went on your knees to 'em. They like it. And——"

Tempest moved nervously. Would Slicker's tongue carry him into dangerous latitudes? But Jennifer's rare temper was waking.

"Boys think it so clever to make fun of everything," she said. "They haven't imagination enough to see the true, wonderful beauty of life. I can see a little—just a little. And I'm going to tell the world. I'm going to write some articles for a Toronto paper. I began last night."

"Do. I reckon it would be well to get all that stuff out of

your system right away. And then put 'em in the stove. But be careful, for I guess there will be plenty hot air in 'em to burst the pipes."

Jennifer whipped round on him like a kitten about to spring.

"You—you—you animal!" she cried. "Come off my table this instant! Stop eating my berries! Don't sit there with your hair all over your head, staring like that! And don't you *dare* put your feet on my carpet! They're mud up to the elbows!"

"Sakes!" said Slicker, bewildered into alarm for the first time in his life. "I can't jump right out of here in once."

For an instant more Jennifer's temper possessed her. Then she dropped on the window-seat and laughed with the two men until her eyes ran over.

"You're not fit to live, Slicker," she said. "Go away. Go away and die. But don't do it on our doorstep. I mean it. Indeed I do! You haven't left me one berry for supper, and you've made me lose my temper, and you're in disgrace. Good-bye. You can come back for your socks to-morrow. And—shut the door."

They heard his serene whistle as he strolled down the mud-track to the Lake. Then Jennifer glanced up at Tempest.

"You'll stay supper, won't you?" she said. "Harry will surely be in directly."

"Thanks," said Tempest absently. "I shall be very pleased."

He watched her as she drew the wool through Slicker's socks, and that skeleton behind Ducane's door seemed to take shape and move about her. How long would this little ardent girl believe in the "true wonderful beauty of Life?" Or was she perhaps filled with the great heart and the inner wisdom which can hold to it and know it through all pains? Jennifer glanced at him again.

"You don't believe what Slicker says, do you?" she asked.

"Why—every sweeping statement is true and untrue. Slicker has heard so much of what he calls hot air talked about us and every other phase of western life that he quite naturally goes to the other extreme. I imagine we're just men and women out here, you know—the same as in most places. But we're fighting out the ordinary passions and joys and agonies under unusually primeval conditions, and—and I want you to make allowances for that." He hesitated, wondering if he dared give a warning plain enough for her to take. "Men get rougher. They slough off a lot of conventionalities, and—there's quite a good deal of the brute in human nature. They do ugly things, maybe, because they haven't got the perspective to know how ugly they are."

"I haven't seen any of the ugly things," said Jennifer softly.

Tempest looked out on the placid lake where a couple of late ducks cut sharply and black between sedge and sky.

"You will," he said. "You were right when you said that Life was not a novel. It is history, and it needs each one of us to make this history of the West. You have got to do your share. And you are not going to find it easy."

Jennifer's hands had fallen still and loosely in her lap. She never fidgeted.

"You make me feel as if I was on the edge of something," she said. "Of something big and terrible that you know about and I don't. Is that—Life? I couldn't do anything much, you know. I should certainly fail if I tried."

"Why—to fail is a bad thing," said Tempest slowly. "But to be afraid to dare failure is much worse. I guess you wouldn't be afraid to dare."

"But this is a man's life—for men. I can't do anything in it—anything that makes a difference."

"Don't you know that at the moment when a star splits apart each half instantly exerts its pull on every other atom near enough to it? Instantly, and—eternally. There is no getting away from that. There is no burking it. We all exert our pull—through every moment of our lives. You do. I do."

His voice rang strong and vital through the dusk, telling her that he recognized the power of his own pull and was glad of it. She shivered, looking out where the warm lights of Grey Wolf began to blink across the Lake.

"I think you frighten me when you talk like that," she said. "You make me want to be a little quiet soul, hidden away in a corner behind a cloud, and not mattering to anybody. I—I don't think I care to have an influence. Especially when I don't quite know what it is."

"I beg your pardon," said Tempest. He came over and knelt a knee on the window-seat in penitence. "I likely say what I feel too plainly at times. And that is dangerous in a man who serves others. But I can tell you just a little of what your influence may be. We haven't seen dull silk portières, and just those kind of pictures and little bits of old statuary up this way before. Other women keep their houses nice and clean. But this room—well, I imagine you are going to be a civilizing influence, Mrs. Ducane."

Jennifer laughed and pouted.

"You don't think me capable of the big heroics," she said. "Civilization sounds so—so paltry up here."

"God forbid! It's the one rag we have to cover our nakedness until we're fit to grow angel's feathers. Don't ever

strip it off. And don't let any man you come in contact with strip it off in your presence. That is going to be one of your great responsibilities."

"I—I wonder if I want it," said Jennifer.

"You needn't be afraid of it," said Tempest gently. "But the most ignorant of us daily take on ourselves responsibilities that the gods would jib at. We do it because we are ignorant, of course. And that is naturally the very last reason we give for our mistakes—for it is the only one that is going to save us." He laughed, and stood up. "I have been uncivilized enough to give you advice," he said. "But you've no time to get back on me now. There's Ducane."

"Where? Where? I don't see——" Then, as Tempest flung up the window, the swift running beat of an Indian cayuse came to her along the frozen track toward the house. She flashed round at Tempest with sudden crisp life in each inch of her.

"It is; it is," she cried. "But I never heard—oh, Harry!"

Ducane swung round the house-corner; dropped from the high-cantled saddle, and thrust his head through the window.

"Hallo, Jenny," he said, and slid a careless arm round her shoulders. "That you, Sergeant? Well, you're wanted down at the Portage right away. Some white fool—Englishman named Lucas—smashed his mate's head in. Oh, he's got it, sure enough. Best pile after him, I guess. Why—what's to pay, Jenny? It was one of your sex was responsible, I'll bet."

Jennifer shivered in the grasp of his big arm.

"You—you say it as if it was nothing," she whispered.

"Lucas won't find it nothing once the Sergeant has him by the neck, I promise you. Coming out this way, Tempest? Well—stand aside, Jenny."

Tempest slid a leg out and followed it where the pony stood four-square with drooped head and smoking flanks.

"It saves time," he said. "Come down to the canoe with me, Ducane. I want some particulars of this." He smiled, saluting Jennifer. "Don't think of it again," he said. "I apologise—for Lucas."

Jennifer watched the two swing down the narrow trail, and she pressed her hands together over her breast. One of the ugly things had come suddenly, bald and hideous. And it was her husband who had brought it, uncaring. She shut her little sharp teeth down on her lip in swift anger and disgust. Then Tempest's voice came to her memory. "I want you to make allowances—there's a good deal of the brute in human nature."

What was there in Ducane? She knew that she did not know. He had come into her life like a wild, vivid storm;

bearing her out with the force of him into a strange world of hot kisses that half-frightened her and boisterous words that blew away all her shy excuses, until there was a new plain ring on her finger, and his thick, gripping arm about her before she understood if this great thing which had come on her was love in very truth. Her senses were whirling still when he brought her home and kissed her on the lips as he lifted her out of the rig.

"Our home, Jenny," he said. "And not fit for you, little girl. But, by ——, I'll make it fit now I've got reason."

His very oath had excited her, thrilled her. She had not heard men speak so before, and it was surely part of this great virile world out of which he had come to her with his loud voice and his manner that rushed all before it. Now, even as the canoe shot off from the bank and Ducane shouted words after it, there swept over her, horribly, vividly, the contrast between her husband and Tempest. Harry had coarse words and coarse thoughts that he no longer troubled to hide from her. Harry was—he was one who might do ugly things; one for whom she must make allowances. Make allowances for him! For Harry! With a gasp of sudden blinding agony she turned and fled through the dark house to the hithermost end of it, hearing Ducane calling after her:

"Jenny! Hi, Jenny! I want you."

CHAPTER III.

"I KNOW WHAT I'M AT."

"PAYATUK," said Dick. "Go carefully. Tell him we don't want to scare him, Phillipe."

"Him t'ink you mebbe in big hurry," interpreted the breed.

"That is kind of him. Explain that I earn my dollar-ten a day by waiting until he's ready to speak. But intimate that though he's my totam he's got to yakwa what he says, all the same."

Phillipe interpreted in low rapid gutturals. And in the little barrack-room where Tempest held his courts Kicking Horse, pure-bred Cree Indian, stood motionless and hunched in his ill-fitting store clothes. But the eyes in the copper-dark face overhung by the matted hair were alive enough for a regiment of men.

In perspective beyond the glass door showed more Indians, huddled in their fur coats and caps. For winter had descended suddenly upon Grey Wolf, thrusting the thermometer below zero with decision, and pasting all the land with a thick white layer that shone in the sun like a wedding-cake baked for a god.

At the bar of inquiry within Kicking Horse moved solemnly; bringing from under his coat the old fluttering hands where the brown veins and muscles ran corded like fibres on rotted leaves. He began to speak; using his tongue little, but weaving his story on the picturesque sign-language which Phillipe interpreted as one may interpret a telegraph-ribbon unrolling.

"Him and Pasasun mates many suns since. Dey go to-gedder all taime. Den Pasasun marry—lif on Reserve here. Kicking Horse him shoot an' fish—go all over. Von day him see Pasasun."

"When was that?"

Phillipe studied the swaying hand-movements.

"Two moons and six suns past. Pasasun ver' happy dat day. Him haf much trink—good trink—make him walk

so——" Phillipe's hands suggested the progress of a snake-fence. "But it no mak' him seeck dat taime."

Seven hours before Dick had found Pasasun drunk in Robison's shack. And, because to give drink to an Indian is a punishable offence throughout all the North-West, the interrogation of other Indians had naturally followed, Pasasun himself being in a state of sublime uncertainty regarding essentials.

"Why didn't it make him sick that time?" asked Dick.

"It was très bon w'iskey dat w'ite man gif him——"

Dick half-suppressed the exclamation. But it was too late. Kicking Horse realised that he was presenting information of import to this man in the brown brass-buttoned tunic who sat with unknown instruments of terror about him in little black bottles and small pointed black sticks. His conscience was clear, but he did not know what those black things and that spear-eyed man might make of it. And he did know that there was an empty cell beside Pasasun's. His hands fluttered to cover again.

"Wah, wah," he said heavily, and stood silent.

Dick smothered a groan. His knowledge of men told him that this stream had run dry for all time. But because the fragments of information gleamed here and there required this link badly he drove on with his questions.

"What was the name of the white man?"

The answer came as he had expected.

"Kicking Horse him not know."

"Does he live in Grey Wolf?"

"Him not know, Corp'ral."

"Was it the same man gave Pasasun drink last night?"

"Kicking Horse not know."

"Does he know anything more, Phillipe?"

Phillipe questioned.

"Not von dam t'ing." He explored further into the Indian's consciousness. "Him not know w'at him tell you pefore, Corp'ral."

Dick pushed his chair back.

"He can go," he said. Then, watching Kicking Horse shuffle out, he added: "I would give much to be able to lie with your serenity, my friend."

He pulled open a drawer in the table, took out a sheaf of papers, and fell to work with his forehead knotted by thought. Sudden suspicion had come to him that this matter was an illumination on something which had been distracting Grey Wolf lately, and he hunted what he wanted through official pamphlets and reports with his eyes growing more eager as he neared his goal. His natural suspicions of his kind helped him here, and also his personal knowledge of sorts of dis-

honesty which would never occur to Tempest. By way of his great intuition and powers of deduction he wound a tortuous course through the papers until his mind fastened at last with a leap on the clue he sought for. He looked up with his eyes narrowed and dark and rather puzzled. Then he shrugged his shoulders with a slight laugh.

"Why, of course; who is better fitted to deceive law and justice than the man who holds the scales," he said. "But I fancy—I really fancy that we have got it in for you this time, Mr. Ducane."

He picked up the notes on Kicking Horse's evidence, and the paper which had led to his conclusion; took them into Tempest's office, and stood attentive while Tempest read the little information vouchsafed by the Indian. Dick watched him idly. Tempest had developed considerably since the old days. He was a fine-looking fellow, with that broad, untanned forehead where the bright hair lifted vigorously, and those lit, introspective eyes of the dreamer, and the firm jaw of the man who can do. It was the face of one who was not likely to run to wreck on his passions as Dick had done himself.

Tempest looked up at last, laying aside the official tone.

"I can't think who the white man is likely to be," he said.

"Can't you?" There was an edge of mockery in Dick's tone. "It is Ducane."

"Ducane! What are you thinking of! He is District J.P. He is a gentleman."

"Those two facts helped my deductions immensely. It is also Ducane who, with Robison's assistance, is doing the dirty work for that bogus company which is selling lots that exist on paper only and scrip-land which on examination turns out to be Indian Reserve."

That bogus company had been giving Grey Wolf much trouble of late. Men and women had come up to take possession of land that never was there, and of Indian Reserve which no one could sell. Some had given all they had for the little bits of worthless paper which they had brought to Ducane or Tempest with wrath or tears. Tempest had had a woman in the office yesterday, and he did not forget it. But this assertion staggered him.

"By what right do you make such an insinuation?" he said sharply.

"It is not an insinuation. Robison is related to half the tribes in the North. Pasasun is a connection of his. Robison is very thick with Ducane. Morally I daresay he is the better man. But they hardly move in the same social circles. Why are they friends? They are working some underhand game together. I have heard of more than one breed selling Robi-

son scrip-land lately. Where does Robison get the money? From Ducane. Where does Ducane get it; for all the world knows he hasn't a cent to spend on his land? From the bogus company. Where do they get it? From the innocents down in Virginia and Kentucky, and away in England, who are hooked by the prospectuses and pamphlets which Ducane and Robison concoct and send out, for a consideration, to the bogus company."

"This is only deduction, you know."

"Everything is deduction originally. Do you remember this official report showing that one or two breeds near Chipwyan have taken scrip lately? I know that one sold again at once. How does the Government Commissioner know that they are breeds? If Robison can persuade a light-coloured Indian to take oath that he is a breed—and we know that this is occasionally done, that Indian will get his breed privileges, and his scrip-land from the Government. Then he sells it to Robison, which means Ducane, and Ducane pays for it with the commissions on his work for the bogus company."

Tempest sat still with his chin in his hand.

"What has all this to do with Pasasun's drunkenness?" he said.

"Possibly Robison was drunk too. But he is more accustomed to it. Ducane would necessarily need to treat Robison and his relations sometimes—privately, of course."

"This is a very heavy charge, Dick. I can hardly think that you are right. Besides, Ducane has very few permits, and he only brought five gallons in with him. And he can't get much from Grange, or Grange would speak of it. He's honest."

"Oh, my dear chap, there have been plenty of permits booked outside lately in the name of men who never ordered them, and received inside by Ogilvie and others who are not supposed to have them. We know that much—unofficially, of course."

A permit is a two-gallon cask of whiskey allowed, for certain money paid down, to be received at various times by various men of substance and character. But, like all things defined by law, it holds loopholes for evasion. Tempest swung sharp in his chair.

"*Do* we know that much?" he said.

"*Do* you think it necessary to play the innocent with me?"

Tempest stiffened. His body took on hard outlines.

"I wonder what sort of man you really are now," he said slowly. "How long have you known of this?"

"Ever since I came. And I considered that you were using your common-sense in shutting your eyes to it. There's no

use in drawing too tight a rein, and we'd never get any information with every man's hand against us."

He found himself being led into excuses, and he stopped in anger.

"Do you remember your oath?" asked Tempest.

"I believe you have turned out rather funnier than you promised to be," observed Dick approvingly.

"Never mind that. Do you?"

"I remember subscribing my fervid appreciation to several things which no man keeps or is expected to keep."

"You'll keep them while you're under me, or I'll have you discharged. I don't intend that there shall be any scum in the Force if I can help it."

"You are over-valuing your powers, I think," said Dick; but his mockery was gone, even while Tempest looked at him, remembering Molson's assertion that this man was indifferent to punishment and wondering what lever can move a will when shame is broken.

Then he saw the painful red flush up the brown skin, and Dick turned his shoulder, walking through the room. Tempest guessed then, with a swift gladness. This man was not indifferent to the opinion of the man who had been his friend. He spoke again, less sternly. And in the end Dick submitted, rather from amused indifference than conviction. But Tempest had learnt something from that short contest.

"You know more about this business than I do," he said. "I empower you to work it up."

Dick was pacing the room with head low. He stopped suddenly.

"You old devil," he said; and Tempest smiled.

"You've got the executive faculty more developed at short range than anyone I know," he said.

Dick walked again. But his face was changing. His eyes brightened slowly. Then he began to laugh with a soft, purring note like a big cat, and his steps were soft as those of a cat.

"You give me a free hand?" he said, and Tempest laughed again.

"As free as is compatible with your uniform. Go on, and do your damndest."

And then, quite suddenly, he remembered Jennifer. Dick's next words trod on his thought.

"Ducane has a wife, hasn't he?"

"That's so," said Tempest quietly. But Dick saw his limbs twitch.

"Why haven't I seen her?"

"I suppose this first cold snap has kept her at home."

"Take me over to see her to-morrow."

"Give me your word you won't——"

"Good Lord! *no*, man. That's what I want her for. It's always easier to get at a man through his women-folk."

Tempest looked at the face that was red with the light of the lamp which Poley had just brought into the passage. It was a dangerous face. It was recklessly alive and alluring, and there was a spark of eagerness in it now that turned Tempest sick.

"You're a brute, Dick," he said.

"Very possibly. But I'm going to shoot Ducane out of here. He has jockeyed the District long enough, and—I guess that case is worth while. But I want your postmark on me with the wife. It will save a deal of time."

"What do you purpose doing with her?"

"Making her talk, of course. What else?"

"You'll end by making her suffer—when she knows what she has talked for."

"Well——" Dick put Jennifer aside with a gesture. "Why should women get off cheaper than men?" he said. "They are one-half the human race, and they are accountable for most of the mistakes it makes—the dear creatures!"

"They don't get off cheaper."

"Mrs. Ducane isn't going to get ten years—or may be twenty—for fraud. Ducane is, I hope. And she'll probably be very glad to get rid of him." Then, suddenly, "Is your talk about your work meaning more to you than anything all hot air?" he demanded.

"No."

"Then don't put a spoke in my wheel with Mrs. Ducane. I know what I'm at!"

Tempest was leaning forward with his face in his hand. Quite clearly he saw that inexorable law which is made for all time. Canada was calling; the coming nation was calling; the type which nature is eternally building anew was calling. And the individual, the separate soul, must, now as ever, be powdered to dust to feed it, if need be. It was the law; and there big and dark, with the red light on his face, was the kind of man whom Nature chooses to enforce these kinds of laws for her. He spoke slowly.

"I'll take you—if necessary."

Dick came near. His eyes were curious.

"I believe you'd offer up me—yourself—your own wife if it were necessary," he said.

"If it were necessary I shouldn't have the choice," said Tempest, unguessing the future.

But Dick walked out of the room whistling.

"We all have the choice, my son of a gun," he said. "And that's why we are so precious sure that there is a hell."

Tempest sat in the half-dark room for very long. This matter had brought him to the edge of understanding again, where he sought, painfully, blindly, as the human must always seek, for the reason of it all.

What was the secret, the solution behind all this brutality and unmeaningness? What was that Power which weaves and unweaves, makes and unmakes, gives to life and takes back to death? What does it mean by playing cat and mouse with man through all the endless centuries? What is that great resistless Power which draws us in over the rollers of the present to tear us up in the machinery of the future? And why, since all of life goes to feed the same mill, should there be such divers and nice complexities in our being? Tempest turned his mind on these men and women just under his hand. Dick, indifferent concerning his sins and the sins of others, yet whipped by a sudden trick of fancy into a merciless enforcer of the law. Ducane, the fine blustering shell of a man, with the soul of a louse, and yet capable of that strange redeeming love for his wife. Jennifer herself, blind on the rim of all the mysteries, deaf to the clamour of that sharp-toothed machine which is the future. Robison, animal and man in one, born to suffer for the more refined sins of others. What were they for? What was the great secret which would fuse all this muddle of flesh and spirit throughout the straining universe into that majestic all-conquering whole which alone could justify its being?

Tempest never asked himself if there was a meaning. He had come into that knowledge long since. But again and again, as now, he shaped half-aloud the question which belongs to the next step of the way.

"God—or whatever Great Power you call Yourself—what is it *for*? What are you doing it all for? What is the secret? What is the meaning? And why can't we know it to help us?"

All that was good and pure and fine in him reached out for the answer, stopping his breath. Far-off worlds seemed to creak and groan as they swung their ordered way. Far off that secret lay, brooding calm interpretation over chaos. Tempest had come so far many times with the knowledge that the secret was not for the dwellers on the earth. Now, halting just one instant with the wind and the flash of those worlds in his face, he saw further before he dropped back to earth. He straightened in his chair, closing his hand slowly on the table.

"Before God it *is* for us," he said. "Because it is formed by us and works through us. Without us the meaning and the secret and the solution couldn't *be*. It needs us as we need it. We belong to each other, and we can't make the whole

until we find it. And yet we eternally lock it out from our understandings."

His eyes were wide, unseeing; the eyes of the dreamer who dreams realities; of the man who looks into his soul. The intensity of that inner search whitened his face, drawing it into lines. At last he stood up. The finite will would hold him in those rarer heights no longer. But he had taken one step further. By whatever mysterious ways the secret of Life is hid from man; by whatever mysterious ways he may stumble to it at last, it is there to be found. Because it is not God who has hidden it, but man himself.

A moment longer he waited, as though to gird up his loins. "Great Power," he said, "we've got to find that secret; to justify ourselves—and You."

In the passage the yoke of routine fell on him again. He took the lamp and went swiftly up the narrow stairs to give Dick a forgotten order. The bunk-room was empty, but he halted a moment, sweeping the light round it. He had not been there since Dick came, and the man's personality rose at him from every corner. On Dick's bare bunk, with its neat sausage of rolled clothes at the head, lay his fur coat and cap, his half-cleaned rifle, and a torn shirt stained with oil. His black oilskin kit sprawled on the floor, vomiting underwear and stockings, and the well-known initials stared up from it in bold white. Waist-belts, cartridge-belts, empty shells, leather straps, an unrolled puttee, moccasins, and a spur with a broken rowel strewed Kennedy's bed, conclusively proving that Kennedy was away. And Dick's clothes were everywhere. Against the wall a half-dozen of his sketches were crookedly pasted; but never a photograph or a picture to hint of past days.

Tempest walked across the room to look at the sketches. Kennedy had regularly ripped them down until Dick brought the paste-pot, and they showed signs of his disapproval.

"Sloushy kind o' thoughts," he called them; but Tempest looked at them with bitten lips.

A woman's moccasin, one; fine in the upper with beadwork and porcupine-quills, but worn through and blood-stained in the sole. A spider-web spun from star to star, to catch a spinning world. A half-shut eye on the edge of space, looking out with serene contemplation on nothingness. Two heads; the man's stooped to that of the woman who lifted her lips but covered her eyes.

Tempest trod down again slowly. Was Dick also seeking in his own wild way for that eternal secret? And, if so, which man would find it, or would both go out into the rimless future, seeking still? Very surely they sought along different trails—Dick with the bitter goad of a wasted life to flail him

on; Tempest with the pure heart to which it is promised that it shall see God. Down in the kitchen he heard Poley setting out the granite bowls and cups in which Dick carried the food across the yard to the cells. Then he heard Dick swear in sharp wrath at the heat of the bowls.

"Don't you try those games with me, you old sinner," he said. "Fetch me some plates to put 'em on."

"Don't you come your Judge-an'-whole-dam-constitution style over me," retorted Poley with spirit. "Fetch yer bloomin' plates yer bloomin' self."

Tempest waited the next move with interest. Dick spoke softly.

"I promised to take my next sketch of you down to Grange's. That new waitress seemed quite a good deal struck on you, Poley."

In the dark Tempest grinned. He heard Poley shuffle over the floor.

"There's yer plates," he said pacifically. "Off wi' yer, I'll open the door."

An icy breath rushed in to prove it. Tempest turned into his own room. Dick's knowledge of the forces which moved humanity might not be high, but no man could deny that they were occasionally diabolically convincing.

On the next morning when breakfast was done Tempest gave his commands to Dick.

"You'll have to go out on the Moon-Dance trail right away," he said. "Word has just come in that O'Hara has had his team go to blazes with him again. He always does, but I'm afraid he's got it for good this time. De Choiseaux is just off, and I want you along with him to take O'Hara's depositions if necessary."

Dick had had his own ideas for that day.

"We were going over to Ducane's," he objected.

"That can wait. O'Hara probably won't. You'd best take some grub, and—you may have to stay all night, you know." Then, ten minutes later, when the doctor's rig swung up to the door, he added, "De Choiseaux has mighty little English and O'Hara hasn't a word of French. If you have to put him through just—be a bit merciful if he hasn't your contempt for such small things as eternity and death."

Dick nodded sulkily at the whimsical face, and tucked himself into the rig where the pony fidgeted with lowered quarters and ears laid back.

"You'd best do those kind o' chores yourself," he muttered. And then, as the pony went down the trail like a loosed spring, he turned his collar up against the air that was sharp and brittle-feeling as glass, and retired on his inmost thought.

De Choiseaux drove with his knees up and a rein in each

great fur-mittened hand. He was doctor for some uncounted hundreds of miles here and there, and as French as a man can possibly be who has lived twelve strenuous months in the North-West. Dick detested him ; and de Choiseaux, never guessing that Dick could have used to him much better French than his own, accepted the disabilities of " these so gauche English," and extended him a gentle compassion mixed with encouragement. But Dick proving blank against all things just now, de Choiseaux cracked his whip at the solitudes and talked to his mad-headed pony instead.

The pines were ebony columns upbearing a mighty nave-roof of snow on frozen branches, and the little trees stood among them like tufted candles at a shrine. The whole forest was very still, with the thrumming note of the sled runners sounding through it like the diapason of an organ. Once Dick's trained eyes saw a single footprint which showed where a trapper had left the trail. Once a flurry of snow that told where a struggle had been. And once again a black stick explained that it had snapped and shed its burden since the last snowfall. He noted these things because it was his nature. But the whole of his conscious mind was focussed on Ducane.

He had no special quarrel with Ducane, any more than he had special interest in the people of Grey Wolf. When Tempest spoke, vague desire stirred in him to look on his work as a sacred thing. When alone he knew that he looked on it as a mink looks on the trail which it follows. To track a man into the very burrow where he lies hid ; to jump on him sudden and sharp, noting in what manner he bears himself under the supreme moment—these were some of the very few things that did not grow stale to Dick. The unexpectedness of the human ; the impossibility of calculating exactly when he will double or run backwards or spring ; these were the things that gave joy to the chase and made it worth while. And all the good or evil that neglect or fulfilment of his work might mean to Canada were such a side issue that he always roused in new surprise when Tempest spoke of it. And yet he had a genius for his work which Tempest would never have, although Tempest offered flesh and spirit to it daily.

The sled swayed out of the forest and a white ocean heaved broad billows about them. Bush and hollow, ridge and snake-fence were as levelly white as paper. Dick wondered idly what kind of land O'Hara was like to find where he was going. Would the vivid air bring the blood leaping from a man's heart along his veins there ? Would there be a bull-moose like that one on horizon to strike a wonderful note of virility over this senseless snow that pushed itself against the pale blue of the sky ? Would a trail like this of the Moon-

Dance, kept hard by the passing of many Indians, lead O'Hara anywhere—anywhere at all? Dick yawned, and turned to torment de Choiseaux.

"I think that pony is going lame on the near fore," he said.

"Comment?" said de Choiseaux. Then he apologized and endeavoured to struggle down to Dick's level. He was struggling still when Dick sat upright with a sharp oath which cut de Choiseaux's efforts in half. O'Hara's shack lay on the snow like a boat in the trough of a wave; and, down the slope where a snake-fence was broken and tangled, an up-ended sled tilted athwart a dead horse. A trail wound from the sled to the shack; a wide smudged trail, dabbled here and there with blood; and, twisted through and through it like a thread, ran the coyote-spore which ante-dated the accident twenty hours back at least.

"But he brought himself in," said Dick. "Well—a man has to pay for his carelessness."

He followed his knock into the shack. But de Choiseaux shot past him, gripping his great black bag in both hands.

"Ah, mon brave," he began. "Eh! Cet pauvre petit——"

O'Hara moved, and unquenchable humour gleamed in his eye.

"Faith, Docthor, dear," he said. "'Twas main thoughtful ov ye tu bring me coffin wid ye."

Dick laughed, stooping over the bunk.

"You've got your wits, anyhow," he said. "How are you, O'Hara?"

"That's for him to tell," said O'Hara slowly. "I—dunno."

Instinct told Dick that he did. And then de Choiseaux went to work with the energy of a man chopping wood. Ejaculations flew like chips, spattering over the Irishman's occasional groans, and Dick kept out of range until a shout from O'Hara brought him over to see part of the shining contents of that bag ranged along the floor.

"Kape him off wid them saws," roared O'Hara. "Set him cuttin' lumber tu build a house. Begorra, he has machinery enough wid him. Och, Corp'ral, what did ye let him intu here wid all that tu him for?"

"C'est necessaire," shrilled de Choiseaux, and spilt the odour of chloroform into the air.

Grey and sweating with pain O'Hara leaned over, selected a wooden mallet from beside the bunk, and jerked it with under-arm swing into the shining array.

"Maybe that'll tache him to putt a dacent men tu slape so he can walk off wid his appendums an' things," he said. "Just tell him that if I'm dyin' I'm dyin' in wan piece, Corp'ral, dear."

" Il est fol," said de Choiseaux, advancing with the sponge.

Dick glanced from the brisk-stepping little man with the erect shock of hair to the heavily-breathing giant on the bunk, and the grim humour of these man-made limitations which will not untangle even with Death as interpreter tickled him to something near laughter. Then he assaulted the amazed de Choiseaux in a pure French that left him sputtering, and stooped again to O'Hara.

" Be easy, O'Hara," he said. " He is not going to touch you."

There was silence. Then O'Hara said :

" What du that mane ? "

" I fancy you know," said Dick, with dropped voice. And the whole of him was alert if sudden action were needed.

One shudder ran through O'Hara. Then he burst into a blaze of wrath.

" What du that——want wid cuttin' me up, thin ? What did he mane, the blood-suckin' little skunk ? Howly mother, lind me the loan ov him till I wring the little wry neck of him——"

" Delirium," crowed de Choiseaux, bobbing into range. " Parblieu ! I expected it."

Dick swung him clear of the giant's long arm.

" You'll likely get what you don't expect in a minute," he said. " Steady, O'Hara. It's only professional instinct. He had to try to do something."

" Let him go an' thry ut outside, thin." O'Hara dropped back exhausted. " Arrah ! Get me rid ov him ! How shud I be turnin' me sowl tu hivin wid him an' his knives afther me ? "

Dick made the matter clear and comprehensive. De Choiseaux met it with heated reference to his diploma and other matters. Then Dick took him by the elbows and ran him out, for a certain look on O'Hara's face had warned him that there was no time for civilities. He trod back softly, laying his warm living hand over the clammy one.

" All right," he said. " You can take your time about it. Now—have you any matters to fix up ? "

O'Hara spoke with long pauses between, and Dick followed the lips with his pencil. O'Hara's dog howled once with its nose up. Then it curled in the blankets at its master's feet and slept. A clock on the wall ticked busily, shortening down the minutes, one by one. At last O'Hara raised himself, and his eyes grew dark.

" I—wud be wantin' tu make me confession," he gasped.

Dick sat back on his heels in alarm.

" Holy Powers, don't make it to me, man," he said. " I've sins enough of my own."

"Anny man can give anny man absolution——"

"I couldn't. Don't speak of such a hideous farce. Ask de Choiseaux."

"If the Sergeant had sint a praste—why didn't he sind a praste?"

"You never go to chapel. I suppose he didn't know you had any religion."

"A man foinds the nade ov ut—when he comes tu die——"

"Does he?" Dick wondered a moment. "I can't see what difference it makes," he said. "But go on, if it's any amusement to you. I'm listening."

O'Hara spoke in whispers broken by the ebb and flow of his life-tide. And then he twisted on his bed.

"Grange's Andree has come back tu Grey Wolf," he said. "I was goin' in tu see her when—this came."

Dick nodded. He was not concerned with Grange's Andree. His mind was puzzling over some of the bald, stupid things which were all O'Hara had been able to do in the way of sin. O'Hara's hand shot out and grasped Dick's sleeve.

"Corp'ral," he whispered. "For what ye may hear about that girl du not lay ut up against her. Du not. An'—ye'll hear plenty. She's no more than the birrd in the forest for understanding. It goes wid the natur ov her tu have the bhoys afther her—faith, they're all that an' more. And she don't know—she don't know——" His voice broke and caught up again. "Maybe she have not a sowl—or a hearrt—I dunno. I dunno. But I wudn't she had a hearrt in her tu make her sad. Betther as she is, the darlin'. Betther as she is. An' if a man says anything against her—give him the lie from me. An' who wud give ut if ut was not me——"

Dick was interested now.

"Where has she been?" he said.

"Outside—tu Calgary—I was woild tu see her again, an' I putt in the furrst horse that come—well—bhut give me the worrd on the lips ov ye, Corp'ral. Say: 'If anny man says annything against her O'Hara will come back tu give the lie tu him.' Say ut."

Dick said it, not knowing that he himself was to qualify for O'Hara's visit very fully in the days to come.

"Mary—have mercy——" muttered O'Hara; and fell into stupor, and presently went on to present his prayer in person.

When the necessary work was done by the two men moving softly in the dingy shack de Choiseaux drove home through the coming dark to one who needed him still, and Dick turned to the labour that was his to do.

He overhauled O'Hara's freight-sled in the stable, padding it level with empty sacks and blankets. He went with his knife to the snake-fence and cut and dragged the harness clear

of the dead horse, while the sun turned all the waste of snow to pink and delicate umber that steeled to cold blue, and the rigid air numbed his nose to the edge of frost-bite, and left his fingers stiff when he had rubbed that danger away. He fed the living remainder of O'Hara's team while the dog slunk at his heels, explaining the fear that was in him. Then he lit up the stove and fed himself, with O'Hara unobjecting in the bunk against the wall; and, later, he brought horse and sled to the door, got O'Hara aboard with difficulty, and started back with the dog at his feet for the eight-hour drive into Grey Wolf.

Death meant less to him than to many men. The tragedies that belong to the loneliness meant less, because familiarity had worn away the edges that cut. He sat hunched in his furs, with keen eyes only uncovered, and the sledge burring on the hard-stamped trail. Up in the pale night the moon stared nakedly; the Lights blew up like white smoke from the world's pipe of peace, then melted suddenly into a spirit-dance of indecent glee, with the swishing of silken flags and the crackle of far-off laughter.

The snow lay in wind-rows to all horizons, and every wave of it was a swathe flung down to die. The dog at Dick's feet raised himself to smell the air and howl, and back at the snake-fence a coyote barked in answer. Then, far across the waste, drifted their shadows, one by one; slinking, silent, seeking blood. The single howl of a wolf rang metallic out of the forest ahead, and Dick's senses, always vividly alive, understood. The North-West was abroad amongst her own; indifferent to those who served her and died by her hand; splendid in her arrogance, calm with irresistible power, with careless cruelty. All the wild things that she nurtured fought her, tooth and claw, for their subsistence. All the soft-treading, keen-eyed men of the back-trail met her, breast to breast and grip to iron grip. She played with them, kissed them with her fragrant lips of summer, taught them to love her, and then fastened on them swiftly with her sharp white teeth and her breath that kills.

Dick looked at a couple of big stars that watched him indolently over the flank of the range, and his mind slid back to Grange's Andree—the girl who had no soul for the man who loved her.

The Lights rollicked in their game of hide-and-seek over half a world. The moon slid low, indifferent still; the black hard line of the forest neared and opened, letting them into a world of dimness where the tall trees stood like mutes with bowed heads cowled with white. Very sound seemed frozen silent. The whispering creak of the sledge grew finer, thinner. The moon dropped down and the Lights went home to the

waiting bergs, and the life that moved in the forest was stealthy as they.

The world was dark yet when the pale line of the frozen lake rose like a ghost by the trail-side. A pair of prowling Indian dogs, hungry as their race has been through immemorable ages, loped alongside with raised bristles, smelling the dog at Dick's feet. It swore defiance back until Dick kicked it out to make its own arrangements, and he drove down the one street of Grey Wolf with a chorus waking the echoes about him.

In a side-window at Grange's a sudden match spurted into light and stayed. Dick had an idle fancy as he drove past. Did Grange's Andree know that O'Hara had come into Grey Wolf to keep his tryst after all ?

CHAPTER IV.

"GRANGE'S ANDREE."

On the next morning Dick went to church. It was not the solemnity of his late contact with death, nor the knowledge that O'Hara lay in a Roman Catholic chapel with lights at his head and feet, that disturbed him. But after he had slept and breakfasted and given in the written matter concerning that day's work to Tempest, he looked from the bunk-room window and heard the English church-bell ring, and saw a girl go by with a long coat of warm-coloured fur and copper-red hair that gleamed once under her cap. And Dick rushed himself into his outer clothes and followed her. For the flutter of a woman's dress was always a flag that blew for him, and his mind had not forgotten the dead man and the broken sled that attested to his haste to see Grange's Andree.

The church was little and bare, with a few staring Sunday-school texts on the wall. The big black stove-funnel ran its hot length down the aisle, and a handful of derelicts had drifted in for warmth, as the vagrants do in continental churches. The preacher was a young, shy man from the English Mission on the other side of Grey Wolf; Forbes, the English boy in Revillons, played the harmonium; and, scattered here and there along the funnel-line, were the half-score traders' wives and families which were all that Grey Wolf could spare to God on Sundays.

Dick felt rather than heard the little flutter caused by his entrance. It amused him, for he had no belief that the religion of the world went very deep. He chose a seat behind the girl in the long fur coat, and bent his head idly to the prayer which followed. But under his hand he was noting the thick coils of hair and the lobe of the small ear close-set to the head. The artistic temperament was strong in him, and if he had not twisted his life awry he might have done good work there. Now that power was partly derelict, like all else. But the emotions roused by it were sharp yet, and the dainty poise of the girl's head arrested him.

It was the end of that struggle begun more than a month

back which had brought Jennifer to church this day. She had not come before because that sharp, painful awakening had shocked her out of all her normal beliefs, and for a while all things natural and true were distorted for her as the vision of a nine-days' kitten is distorted when it opens its eyes for the first time. Jennifer's eyes opened for the first time when she fled in unreasoning terror from Ducane through the sounding house. And when he had found her, and bullied her and kissed her with all the primitive fierceness of his nature, she had hated him—until the tenseness broke and she hated herself instead.

That mood held, standing her out in the full blaze of realisation where the nerves and fibres of her being lay unnaturally bare, quivering to each rough touch, and each coarse word. And then one night swept her outside all that for ever; one night when she heard Ducane's voice raised in the prayer of abject fear, and ran in to find the horror of it in his face and eyes, and Robison watching him in contemptuous speculation.

She had sent Robison away, and Ducane had sworn at her. And then he had come after her on his knees, hiding his face in her lap. Jennifer tasted the realities that night; and all the woman in her, all the stricken, dying love in her strove to make allowances, even as Tempest had said. Ducane's broken words, said on his knees, gave her back her values. They placed her husband and they placed herself. Ducane was a whole æon nearer the brute than she was; and because of that influence of hers of which Tempest had spoken, he was beginning dimly to know it.

"You're so far away, Jenny," he said, gripping her waist with both his great hands. "I can hold you like this, and you're right as far away. What's the matter, Jenny? I love you. By —— you know I love you, don't you?"

She knew it, even as she knew him for what he was in the eyes of men. And she knew that his need was great; his need for her love, for her strength, for herself. And she bowed her head in the rough wood pew and offered herself steadfastly, bravely, to him and for him in the desire that Ducane might one day come to his full stature and stand upright by his own clean power.

Young Forbes stumbled out a few bars on the grunting harmonium, and Jennifer lifted her voice shakily in the quaint old hymn beginning:

"We are but little children weak,
Nor born to any high estate . . ."

And then, on the third line, a new voice surged up behind her—bold, strong and true. It broke the thread of Jennifer's

thoughts, jerking her into acute knowledge of it. A man's voice: young, by the verve of it, and yet trained. A gentleman's voice: but not Tempest's, and not the husky tones of Ogilvie, the Oxford man who was drinking himself to death on a remittance. It was not Slicker. It could not be—and then Jennifer's mind sprang to the solution. It was that new man at the barracks of whom Ducane had told her, half-whispering, that he was afraid. The confession had burned her with shame and disgust. Now, hearing the man made concrete by that virile voice, her whole nature roused to defiance and to an oversweeping desire to see him, face to face.

All through the hymn the impulse pulled at her; and with the "Amen" she turned, as though seeking a wrap on the seat-back, and caught Dick's eyes full. There was interest and bold amusement and cynical understanding in them, and she swung back instantly, with the red leaping up her face. Dick flipped open a stray Cree hymn-book; and, stooping decorously through the following prayer, made the first sketch of that sweet crooked mouth and those wide eyes that he was to know by heart in later days.

He ripped the page away and thrust it in his breast-pocket when he followed her out. But Jennifer went down the white ways swiftly, and Dick halted to walk with the wife of the Hudson Bay factor. It was well known in the Force that Dick had his reasons for all he did; but Mrs. Leigh did not guess at the reason for this civility, even when he put it into words on the steps of her own verandah.

The factor's house led down by a clean-swept path to the side-door of the Store, where two freighters, slow-moving yet dominant with that quiet self-possession of the men of the trail, concluded a bargain with Leigh. Their rough dogs slunk round, snuffing Leigh's high moccasins and woollen stockings, and Dick watched them as he spoke.

"Seems to me I'm not keeping track of the people around, Mrs. Leigh. Where was she from—that girl in church with the Cenci eyes and the Titian hair?"

"Do you think she's as wonderful as all that?" said Mrs. Leigh, and laughed. "And have you been here a month and never seen her! Why—she's Mrs. Ducane from over the Lake."

"Mrs. ——" Dick stared with dropped jaw. He had been so certain of the other name. So very certain that not even those eyes had shaken his belief.

Mrs. Leigh interpreted his amazement through the medium of her own two handsome daughters, now married "outside."

"Not a good match for Ducane, many people think. But they say she has a lovely mind. There she is going out now,

and Slicker with her. He is like a pair of brothers to her, that boy is."

Slicker brought the sleigh round the corner of the stables; saw Dick and bellowed a greeting before Jennifer could silence him. Dick came down with long strides, and stood by the sleigh, and the change in the man startled Jennifer. The bold interest was gone, and the contemptuous understanding. In voice and manner Dick carried now all the courteous charm of the elder days. And he was good to look at; better than she had thought.

"Dick," said Slicker, with his vigorous thrust-back of conventions. "My cousin's been under the weather lately—— Well, honey, you've looked like it, sure enough. And I guess it would be the decent thing for you and Tempest to come right along and cheer her up. Don't you want to ask him, Jennifer?"

The understanding in Dick's grave smile pleased Jennifer this time.

"Slicker's got tact, hasn't he, Mrs. Ducane?" he said. "But Tempest talked of bringing me over some day. I'd be glad to take him your message that you could see us this afternoon."

The subtle flattery; the eager ring in the voice; Jennifer's dread of a long afternoon of Slicker's questions swayed her. She gave the invitation with more warmth than she knew, and Dick looked after her as the sleigh drew out of the yard. Slicker's round whistle piped up in the pathetic old Indian song:

"The sun shines bright on pretty Red-wing;"

and Dick, with the dazzle of Jennifer's hair yet in his eyes, drew his lips in. For he knew the end of that song.

"I was right in calling those Cenci eyes," he said. "She has a way of looking as though she had to look and was afraid of what she might show."

Jennifer asked one question as the sleigh flew over the level lake.

"What is he like—that Mr. Heriot?" she asked.

Slicker was young enough to believe that, being on the verge of manhood, he knew all that there was to know of men.

"Why, he's a real good sort," he said. "You'll like him, honey."

That afternoon Tempest learned some more concerning Dick, and it frightened him. For he read the cold-blooded purpose behind that courteous gallantry which had been Dick's heritage even at school. He saw Jennifer laugh and flush and brighten as talk of pictures and music went round, illumined by the light wit which Dick knew so well how to

use when he chose. Molson's words came back to Tempest now with terrible meaning. Until this hour he had not foreseen the chance that Ducane's young wife might walk into a deeper trap than that laid for the betrayal of Ducane. The betrayal of Ducane? It was that, then? Tempest looked at Ducane sitting bluff and heavily jovial against those delicate portières. He looked at Jennifer, down on her knees in the glow of the open fire, laughing as she quarrelled with Slicker over her toast-making; and he looked at Dick, drawn a little apart, with one foot over his knee and that shadow of absorbed contemplation shut down on his lean brown face. Tempest had known that look well, once. Dick's sleuth-hound mind was on the trail again; here, in Ducane's own house; here, where that little laughing wife was to betray the husband.

He stood up with the pulses closing in his throat. It had not seemed like that before; not until he had put it outside his own control by giving it into Dick's. What was it Molson had said of Dick?

"You can't whip him off a trail once he has sensed it."

If Tempest had forgotten that from the old days he knew it again with one look at that brooding face. But he knew that when he got Dick alone he would try to do it.

The horror of the thing made his hand cold when it closed on Jennifer's and his voice stammered.

"Well—I had forgotten. I arranged to meet Randal from the Portage before he went back. Why, yes; Dick can stay if you'll keep him. I'll walk, and I imagine I'll get there as soon, for the new snow has made the surface bad for sleighing—and it's only a couple of miles, anyway."

His senses were buzzing when he got out to the raw grey day, and the bleak wind and the weight of snow on the earth seemed to lie on his heart also. For the first time in his life he felt utterly alone; stunned with beating his head against that awful mystery of the Why; broken-finger-nailed with struggling to pick the lock of it; blind with the long strain of trying to see through it.

A priest went by, wrapped like a stone god on his sleigh, with twinkling eyes only clear. He overtook a half-breed woman and carried her load for her until she turned up a side-trail to her shack. And then only the wind crying in the forest and the patter of the blowing frozen snow along the trail filled up the infinite desolate silence. Tempest felt tired to his very soul; lifeless, devitalized, with his whole world lying flat before him. There was no one in all the earth who could look into his eyes and give him the sympathy of understanding. No one to whom he could tell what it meant to him to see the man he still loved degrading the law in the name of the law. He stood alone in this infinitely lonely life of his.

Alone with his six-fold weekly reports; with the breeds who complained when their pigs were strayed; with the white men who complained when their yards were strayed into. He stood alone all the days of his life, with the regular patrols, the settlement of little sordid matters, the suggestion of law and order which he carried on his own body where he went. For him there was no wife to make the whole world suddenly bright with her presence; no rosy little son in the cot to which a man tip-toes on unshod feet; no home-light other than Poley's lamp to call to him.

These are some of the prices which men pay for the furtherment of Empire, and until this hour Tempest had been proud that he was paying them. Now he trod on with depression bowing his shoulders, for this contemplated sin of Dick's seemed to foul the whole work and shame it.

Then he looked up idly, and far down the streak of trail he saw her running—running straight into his sight and his life and his heart, unhesitating, unknowing. She ran with the long easy Indian lope, and she was white as the winter ermine and nearly as lithe in her long fur coat and her round fur cap with the ear-pieces.

A young moose slung beside her with long fiddle-head and loose lips up, sniffing the taint of man. She came like the strange wild breath that blows in the forest, God only knew why and where and how, and within a man's length of Tempest the moose propped stiffly, making little complaining cries like a child. The girl flung an arm over the rough crest, and the two looked at Tempest with the wide wild soft eyes of the forest-born. The girl was tall and straight. Black hair crisped in curls round the olive oval face where Tempest did not notice the faint, uneradicable stamp of the high cheek-bones. He was watching the red curve of the lips, and the perfect chin where the cap-tie went.

The moose backed, scrabbling its splay feet in the snow, and Tempest spoke like a man suddenly waked.

"I—I beg your pardon. You were in a hurry——"

"No," said the girl. "I was just pretending to be the wind." Her voice was grave. For though she was used to have men look at her, Life had not taken her among those who looked as Tempest looked now.

"For God's sake," he said and moved forward. "Who are you?"

"I am Grange's Andree," she said.

The name meant nothing to Tempest, for Dick had not thought fit to speak of O'Hara's private feelings. The girl whipped off her mitten; swept up a handful of snow, and rubbed vigorously at Tempest's cheek with the colour breaking on her face and her warm breath over him.

" Frost-bite," she explained. And then Tempest took her stiffened hand between his and brought life back to it with an energy that set her to laughing such a rollicking care-free laugh that Tempest laughed too, unknowing why any more than he knew of the Indian taint in her or of the wild drop that called to sky and wind and was never content with the earth.

" Bo' soir, M'sieu," she cried suddenly; pulled free, whistled the moose in the high bell-note that would call him later from his kind in the forest, and fled down the track like the wind she had pretended to be. And Tempest went home with that awakened look yet in his eyes.

Andree corralled the moose in the hotel-lot; fed it with green branches sliced down from spruce and cedar, and flung herself on the hard-wood sofa in the corner of the little back eating-room at Grange's. She thrust her cap back, idly watching Grange's half-breed wife roll her fat bulk to the kitchen and back with plates of smoking meat, with hot biscuits and with babies of various ages and sexes which she set about as indifferently as she set the plates of meat. They lay or sat, according to their size, staring on their small world of smoked log ceiling and rough walls; and suddenly Andree reached her long arms, swung a child up by its clothes and held it close, crooning over it.

" Mon bébé," she said. " Ah, mon bébé."

It took no interest in her kisses, and presently she tired of it, letting it roll back on the floor where it lay screaming until its mother stopped its mouth with a shred of moosemeat.

" It's so sore peety you no mak' marree down in Calgary, Andree," she expostulated.

Andree looked long at the fat, greasy, good-humoured face; at the high cheek-bones and the twinkling beady eyes, and the black coarse hair sleeked down behind the ears. This woman was distant kin to her; but she felt neither love nor disgust at the knowledge.

" Do you like to be married, Moosta ? " she said.

" It is goot to haf' one man work for me," said Moosta calmly.

" Bien ! I like two boy better than one—and three boy better than two." Andree drew basin and spoon to her and began her meal. " Mais—one man all the time ! " she said, and lifted her shoulders.

Moosta pulled the last baby into her capacious lap.

" Mebbe you no hear dey mak' burree O'Hara to-day," she said.

" What ? "

The word was sharp as a box on the ears. It fluttered the gentle Moosta.

"It was s'pose he dead," she explained apologetically.

Andree shivered away as though she had touched something clammy and very cold.

"Akaweya! Do not say it to me! Non! Non! I did not make him dead. I will forget it. Astum, Eustace. Come, petit napasis. We will sing. We will dance."

She swept up a three-year-old who had inherited Grange's eternal giggle, and whirled through the room with him, chanting a song of the lumber-camps.

"Derrier chez nous, ya-t-un étang,
En roulant ma boule.
Trois beaux canards s'en bout baignant,
En roulant ma boule.
Rouli, roulant, ma boule rou——"

Here Grange came in, and she thrust an arm through his; dancing the wild free step with flung-back head and knees bent.

"'Rouli, roulant; ma boule roulant.
En roulant ma boule roulant.
En . . . roulant ma boule.'"

She loosed Grange as suddenly as she had caught him; tossed Eustace into his astonished arms, and stood with hands on hips, swaying and buzzing the air between laughing lips.

"My," said Grange, and let his son slide out of his arms. "I guess you're feelin' good, Andree."

"Wah, wah," said Moosta, with her little eyes puzzled. "I mak' say dey burree O'Hara——"

Andree wheeled and her big eyes shot fire.

"Tais'-vous," she screamed. "Shut up! There is not O'Hara any more. He is gone. We forget him. Ça, ça. We no speak of death. It is stupid. C'est abominable. I hate you, Moosta."

"Sakes; you've sure got your temper still," said Grange with a strangled giggle.

"Bah! That is not to be angry," said Andree indifferently.

She walked back to the table and went on with her soup. Presently she glanced up with the wild-animal look gone out of her eyes before demureness.

"Now I am come home I will wait at table in the dining-room," she said in her best English.

Grange and his wife crossed troubled glances. Then Moosta spoke.

"Tapwa. You no like s'pose dey go off rude wit you, Andree."

"Sure." Grange caught the suggestion eagerly. "You

let that right alone, Andree. There's some raises pertickler Cain o' times. I tell you it's fierce."

"But I want to," said Andree softly, and the two were silenced. They knew Andree.

Later, when Moosta had the last baby on her knees, preparing it for the moss-bag in which generations of her forefathers had grown their tall, shapely limbs, Andree brought her glowing face to the baby's level; chuckling and cooing with it as the fat vague hands tangled the curls over her eyes and dabbed at the laughing lips. Grange, smoking his pale acrid tobacco in his seat by the stove, watched the two women in tolerant pride as their broken words came to him.

"My petit daughter," crowed Moosta. "Ah, netanis; ne waspasoo owasis."

"Mais elle n'est pas dans le moss-bag yet," struck in Andree's vivid tones. "See her toes curl like the young fern-shoots."

She stopped to kiss the soft, brown, small things. And then Robison followed his knock into the room, and looked down on them. He was of Moosta's tribe, and he had known Andree all her days. And into his eyes as he looked came something that made him great and noble for the moment. It passed, swift and sharp; for though a man needs love to make him human, he is often most inhuman when he loves.

"You rustle around out o' that, Andree," he said. "I guess you ain't forgot you was wantin' to play cards wi' me an' Ogilvie."

"What'll Ogilvie do if I don't play with him?" asked the girl, and pressed her lips again to the baby flesh.

"I reckon he'll feel injured," said Robison dryly.

"What will you do?"

"You are wantin' to play wi' me," said Robison.

He spoke quietly, but again there was that suggestion of primitive force. The primitive in her answered to it at once. She pushed back her crisping hair and stood up.

"Call Ogilvie in," she said. "Got any cards in that drawer, Charlie?"

"I suppose," said Grange, and tipped his chair back and jerked the drawer open. "Two decks," he said. "Good 'nough for a love-game, Andree."

Ogilvie heard from the door. He was yet enough of the English gentleman to make his bemused laugh a tragedy to those who could read it.

"Quite so," he said. "And what more would a man play for with Andree as partner?"

"By gar; you soon find I play for the dollars," said Andree, and flung the cards on the table. "Pile in, boys. Here, Charlie—Oh, I'm playing with you, eh? Damn!"

She took the tone of those about her unconsciously and

faithfully as a mirror, and her soft face hardened like the man-faces as the dirty bills showed on the table. But for Ogilvie the game was not upon the table. Twice his arm slid round Andree's waist and was repulsed. The third time she looked at Robison.

"Pick him off," she said, as a child might say of an insect.

Then Robison saw; and he came to his feet with shaggy forehead and red eyes lowering like the buffalo of his own land. Ogilvie took the hint and his departure, leaving two dollars of his money on the table. Grange rolled it up.

"Hands off, Andree," he said. "I guess he's gotter have this back." He rubbed his nose, staring at her. "You sure are a hornet," he said. "What you want to go spoil our game fer, eh?"

"I guess there are others," said Andree indifferently. "Go look in the bar."

Grange went out, and Robison stooped to the girl. And in the shadows beyond Moosta crooned a placid Cree lullaby to her baby.

"You're carin' for me now?" said Robison, and his rough voice shook with feeling. "Andree, you're carin' for me now?"

Her eyes dilated. She leaned forward to him.

"I not know what it means," she whispered. "I cannot understand. I cannot *know*."

Again that look quivered over the coarse, earthy face.

"You ain't learnt what it means fer another man," he said. "I reckon I kin wait so long's you don't do that."

But all a woman's desire to touch beyond her reach was in Andree.

"Suppose I no can help doing that?" she asked, and the breed's face blackened to sudden anger.

"By ——, you'll sure have to help it," he said violently.

But Andree gave no answer. Her eyes were taking on the wide wild-animal fear again. For she was thinking of Tempest who had looked at her as no man had looked at her before. She did not know the look for reverence; but Tempest did. Sitting in his office through the silent hours he knew that he thought of Andree as a man thinks of the woman whom he desires to make his wife. Under the knowledge of this his face was changing. It wore more the serenity of a man who sees home before him than the strenuousness that follows the gleam of a star up the heights.

From a practical point of view there was every reason why Tempest should marry. He was thirty-seven, and love had filtered very sparsely through his years. He believed that his Inspectorship was sure in the near future. He was lonely—and every man needs human love to round and ripen his life.

"Besides," he said, and looked on the inchoate wall-smudge that was maps and memoranda only, "I think it is taken out of my hands, somehow."

He got up, treading the room with his light virile step. But the dreamer-light in his eyes was not the same. He had given his love to an intangible thing; to the great West that was and would be. An hour had made it concrete in the shape of a woman; but he did not think how much would be lost or won through it. And he had forgotten the word of a great one of the earth, "No man can serve two masters."

Dick's step passed in the passage, and Tempest opened the door with his mind closed like a steel trap on the present moment of duty.

"Come in here a minute," he said. Then, facing the other in the lamplight, he added, "Don't you think you can get through by fighting a man in the open?"

Dick looked at him curiously.

"Does she mean more to you than another woman?" he said.

Tempest stared. And, suddenly and very vividly, it burst on him how far, how marvellously far, he had travelled since he last saw Jennifer. He laughed, exultantly, as becomes a man who had just discovered for himself something that is very new and hidden, and very sweet.

"*No*," he said. "But don't you understand, you owl? I can't eat a man's bread and betray him."

"Oh!" The short laugh held contempt. "Well, I can; especially when the man is Ducane." He sat down, crossing his arms on the chair-back. "In an album of Mrs. Ducane's I found two photographs of our wonderful [illegible], which I had seen before—in one of those prospectuses that old man from Tennessee showed us last week," he said.

"You don't mean that!"

"I mean it very certainly. Ducane is the man at this end of the string."

Tempest walked through the room in agitation.

"Even so, I hate to have you do it this way," he said.

"My dear fellow, with a good object in view it is allowable to stretch a point occasionally. I don't pretend to be very moral or very nice in my methods, or very honest, you know. But I have never shirked settling day yet, and if this matter puts me in a corner I hope I won't shirk it then. But I intend that it shall put Ducane in the corner instead. He won't be very pretty when he gets there, either. I have a notion that he'll cry."

"Dick, I can't allow this. It is degrading our work to do it this way."

"It is only when we cease to recognise degradation that it

becomes complete. You may recognise it all you like, Tempest, but you will leave me alone here. You gave me a free hand, and I am going to take it. This case is big enough to make me if I pull it off."

"And you'll sell your honour for that?"

"I could not sell my honour at all—for obvious reasons. You know that I have the blackest sheet in the Force and perhaps the best record for the kind of work that some men don't care about touching. What those widows and maiden ladies and doddering old men are doing about this company which has corralled them, I can't say. But I know what I am going to do. And you will leave me to do it. You are not my master in this."

His voice was still quiet and rather slow. But the amused indifference had gone out of it. Tempest recognised the truth. Dick's mind was on the trail and he would not be whipped off it.

"You have changed more than I ever thought you would," he said.

"Possibly." Dick stood up, stretching his strong limbs. "It was one of that sex which you are being so extremely fastidious about who was responsible in the first place, as you may remember. Oh, I don't owe her any grudge. I have had my fun, as I said. And I am going to take this thing through—also as I said."

He lay awake long that night, assorting such facts as he knew. They were not many, but the very difficulty of the whole complicated matter delighted him. Jennifer knew nothing of it. That was sure. And Slicker knew nothing. Their innocence would help him infinitely. Already he understood Ducane. The man was false and dishonourable right through, but he was also a coward. Robison he knew very little of. The man kept clear of the barracks and the policeman, and any overtures had been met with dislike and suspicion. Now Dick decided to try another way. Rage would show the breed's elemental nature more completely than anything else. It would be easy to touch him there, and Dick was never afraid of consequences. He went to sleep on that with the twitching smile on his lips which Grey Wolf had already come to regard with suspicion.

A week later he put his decision into force on a night of wild storm and eddying snow. The timber-lined mess-room at the barracks was warm that night, and bright with the coal-oil lamps and the red glow from the stove where Kennedy swung the door open. Men going by saw the gleam over the picket-fence, and drifted in, one by one; leaving puddles of melting snow as calling-cards for Poley over the kitchen-floor, and disturbing Dick and Kennedy where they strove to make

up a half-year's arrears with needle and thread on more or less wrecked garments.

The varied degrees of men among which Dick's life was thrown interested him always. But to-night he welcomed them with special graciousness. One of them would serve his need before the night was out. He glanced over them, wondering where his choice would fall. There was Ogilvie, pinched and shakily conscious that he was an old man in his youth. There was Lampard, the cheerful commonplace Canadian in the Hudson Bay Store. There was Slicker; Parrett, the new Dissenting minister; Heinmann, a German boy travelling through to Peace River; and Falconer from Lac La Biche. They drowsed and talked and smoked in their steaming clothes, with the smell of cast furs in the corner growing stronger as the heat increased.

Dick, pulling a thread as long as his arm, broke suddenly into song, with the elements riding their Valkyrie gallop outside.

> "King Charles, and who'll do him right now?
> King Charles, and who's ripe for fight now?
> Give a rouse: here's in Hell's despite now.
> King Charles!"

The outer door burst open, and a blast of icy wind licked past Robison as he stood on the sill with his shoulders peppered with snow.

"Sergeant home yet?" he asked, and slammed the door in obedience to a tenfold command.

"No," said Dick. "Do you want anything?"

Robison intimated that he did; and Dick went through with him to the little court-room, gave the special bit of information required, ripped some memo-forms off the block, and noted on his way back that Robison stumbled on Ogilvie's out-thrust feet and shot him a perfectly unexplainable look of fury in reply to Ogilvie's apology.

"There is something the matter there," said his unflagging brain. But he continued his song untroubled as he shut Robison out in the night.

> "Who helped me to gold I spent since?
> Who found me in wine you drank once?"

"And that we never did," said Lampard. "Though you appear to be bearing up under it."

"Just as well as the H.B.C. is bearing up under the knowledge that it has lost its significance," agreed Dick.

"What's that?" demanded Lampard, instantly afire for the honour of his world-known firm.

"Why——" Dick laid a piece of leather over a rubbed place in the leg of his riding-breeches with care. "The Hudson Bay Company spread everywhere before the missionary, and thereby earned the right to call themselves 'Here before Christ.' Now a missionary has got into some place near Herschel ahead of them, and consequently the Company is doomed."

Lampard was roused to an exhortation on the staying powers of the Company, and Dick finished his work and turned to make a drawing on the backs of those memorandum forms which carry the full title of the Police on the front of them.

"I saw a wood-buffalo on the Twin Hill trail to-day just after you passed, Parrett," he said. "You saw the tracks of it, of course?"

Parrett was the youthful Dissenting minister fresh from Winnipeg, and he knew that his first duty towards these outcasts was to convince them of his ultimate knowledge. He was the only man there who was ignorant of the fact that wood-buffalo fed neither so far west or south by some hundreds of miles, and he fell into the trap instantly.

"Why, certainly," he said. "I saw the tracks. Plenty of them."

"Ah. I saw the buffalo itself. How big would you take it to be by the spore?" asked Dick, bringing out bold sweeps on the paper.

"Why, sure; they were—I guess I didn't measure them."

"Do you think they would fit an animal of about this size?"

Dick flicked his sketch into the group round the stove, and sat unmoved under the comments. Ogilvie sucked his lips in.

"I fancy Mr. Robison will want to kill you if ever he sees this," he said.

"You can show him if you feel like it," said Dick placidly.

The buffalo in the black sharp lines of the sketch wore Robison's little red eyes and shaggy mane of thick hair. It had Robison's slight deformity, magnified into an ordinary buffalo hump, and it waded up to its hocks in mud. Ogilvie folded it with remembrance of that night with Andree in Grange's back-parlour stirring in him.

"We'll see how Robison likes it," he said.

Slicker snatched at it and missed it.

"Oh, you make me tired, Ogilvie," he said. "Tear it up. What did you give it to him for, Dick? You know what Robison is."

This was precisely what Dick did not know. But if that sketch went where he intended he expected to find out. Robison was useless at present, but he might make a valuable enemy.

"Slicker hardly does justice to an artist's natural conceit," he said. "I want to know if Robison recognises it. Be sure you show him, Ogilvie."

"Certainly. But so sure as God made little apples I think he'll try to kill you for it," said Ogilvie; and presently he got up and went his way into the storm.

Dick drew another sheet towards him and went on sketching idly. And this time his song had the old stately, deep-sea tread:

"Good-night to you, Spanish ladies.
Good-night to you, ladies of Spain,"

and the face which he drew in the shadow of his curved hand was the face of Ducane's young wife.

Parrett's high nasal voice cut sharply into the song.

"You—you disreputable young youth," he said.

Dick glanced up at the German boy who puffed his little cigarette at the ceiling, unmoved by Parrett's wrath.

"That last epithet is at once your excuse and your condemnation," he said. "What have you been doing, Heinmann?"

"I say all clever men are immoral," explained the German boy. He contemplated Dick. "Are you moral?" he asked. "I think you do not look it."

Dick accepted the compliment modestly.

"Some day you will speak of your kind with more respect," he suggested.

"But I hope not," said Heinmann. "For respect does not mean love in your language, and I hope to love all ladies—always."

An appreciative laugh sprang into Dick's eyes. Then he glanced at the girl-face in the shadow of his hand. And then he jerked the stove door open; crumpled the sheet, and thrust it in.

"Respect may not mean love in our language, Heinmann," he said dryly. "But love means respect, and I'll trouble you to remember that."

And yet, when they were gone, and when Kennedy had toiled with his armful of derelicts up to bed, Dick sat with his arms on the table, and laughed a low laugh with no mirth in it.

"How very easy it is to humbug others," he said. "What a pity it is not so easy to humbug oneself."

The ring of alert feet came down the passage, and Tempest thrust open the door.

"Ah! You've got it warmer in here," he said. "I'm frozen stiff as boards."

He jerked off his gloves and rubbed his hands before the stove, laughing cheerfully. He brought a changed atmosphere into the room which Dick's thoughts had made sordid; an atmosphere pure almost to austerity, yet gay and quick and eager, and a deep light shone in his eyes which was strange to Dick in its content. For Tempest had been over to the English Mission, and there he had seen Andree for five minutes that it tingled his blood to remember.

"How's Blake?" he asked. "Did you get him to do any work to-day?"

"Well, I did," Dick smiled blandly. "He intimated that he was too crippled with rheumatism. So I stretched him and rubbed him until I fancy he understands me a little better. He chopped half-a-cord of wood after that, and was willing to do more if I'd ordered it."

Tempest looked at him with puckered brows.

"There are ways of doing things——" he suggested.

"I know. And I know Blake. When you have to do sentry-go over a skunk you must treat him like a skunk. It's an insult to his powers to do anything else. He'll sleep well to-night—and so will I."

He yawned, lying back in his chair. The day of both men had been hard; filled to the brim with the numberless common little things which knit up the great whole. For it is on the anvil of the common things that human nature is ordained to be hammered out and toughened for the tests of life.

Tempest went on to his office; but a little later he put his head out, and called Dick up the passage. Dick came, yawning still.

"Did you take any papers out of the court-room just now?" asked Tempest.

"No. Lost anything?"

"I could gamble I left it here," said Tempest, sifting a handful on the desk. "Didn't light your pipe with any of this, I suppose?"

"I tell you—why—I took a couple of memo-forms. But they were blank."

"The top side of the under one had my writing on it. What did you do with them?"

"Burnt one. Sketched Robison on the other, and Ogilvie took it out to show him about two hours ago."

The deep lines came round Tempest's jaw. He stood still.

"Well?" said Dick, and his eyes narrowed. "Hit out. Don't be shy."

"Paul was in this morning about some freighting. He happened to remark that a breed on the Peace who took land about six months ago had sold out to Robison. He said that Robison had been buying in several places lately. Evidently

people are commenting on it. I took down the heads of what he told me in pencil on the memo-block. It wasn't much, but it would explain to those two that they are being watched——"

Dick lifted his shoulders.

"My luck," he said. Then he turned; went up the stairs two at a time, and came back in his outer clothes.

"I'm after Ogilvie," he shouted, and was gone with the slam of the door.

Wrath at the thought that he might be foiled in this special work of his hurried him out where the wind caught him with its full blast across the hills, stinging his face with hard snow. He drove against it with his head low; cut across a side-trail to the shack in the cotton-woods which Ogilvie shared with Hotchkiss; found it empty, and battled back to Grange's, where Jimmy was settling the bar for the night.

"Seen Ogilvie?" he gasped, and reeled in the sudden calm that loosed his sinews after the buffeting.

"Gee!" said Jimmy, and suspended his operations. "What's doing? Murder or suicide?"

"Be easy. You're not accused yet," The tempter in Dick woke at the clink of the bottles. "Give me a whiskey straight," he ordered. "Seen Ogilvie?"

"Sure. He was around right after supper——"

"He was at the barracks since then. Where now? Hit her up."

"My," said Jimmy admiringly. "You sure are a hustler." He leaned on the counter and reflected. "He's likely in the back parlour with Andree," he said. "He's crazy for her. Eh? Well-l-l; I guess! Or maybe he's met the doctor some place an' is standin' under shelter tryin' ter git enough English out of him to know if what he's got the matter wi' him is stomach-ache or heart-disease. But I guess he's jes' sleepin' it off some place. Oh, I tell you; he's sure over to the English Mission. He's been along there three times since doc. told him he was a dyin' man. But I imagine he ain't wuth findin'. He is the biggest toad in the puddle, anyway."

Having quartered Ogilvie to his satisfaction he fell to work again. Dick glanced into the back-parlour. Then he went on, with the wind screaming in the tortured branches that whipped the bare poles, and the whiskey and the hot blood rising in him to fight the bitter cold.

In the lonely forest-trail near the Mission he saw something dark swerve aside from the snow-line and crouch in the trees. He sprang at it as the tuft-eared lynx springs; jerked it up by the arm, and bit off the oath on his lips.

"What are you doing here, Andree?" he demanded.

He had first seen Grange's Andree when she was losing money to some men in Grange's back-parlour. Besides, respect

for his kind was not a natural growth with him, and what he had had was long since gone. He shook her.

"Stop laughing, you imp," he said. "What are you doing out here?"

She swayed in his grip; tall and vivid and vigorous, with the black curls flying out round her head and her long coat wrapped close by the wind.

"Vous venez trop tard," she cried exultantly. "Eh! Vous venez trop tard!"

"Too late for what?" He felt her flinch in his grip, and he tightened it. "I think you had better find that I've not come too late, my pretty one," he said softly.

She laughed again, flinging her arms up.

"Hear the wind," she cried. "Hear the wind! Dieu! C'est to ride the wind when it comes so. Ah! Vous terrible! Vous si cruelle! Ecoutez moi!" she cried to it, breaking into the deep belling whistle of the moose-call. Dick's eyes changed. For she struck his own wild fibres to a chord of restless passion.

"Speak, you little devil," he said, and shook her again. "Who's been here? Ogilvie?"

"Ogilvie! Ogilvie l'ivrogne! Ah! Tant pis pour il if he had."

"I don't doubt it. I fancy it's the worse for anyone who has much to do with you. Who, then? Robison?"

She stood suddenly still.

"Nom de chien," she said pettishly. "How you tease! Oui. Ogilvie did come to the Mission for me, and I sent him home. And Robison did come and I sent him home. And you did come—too late."

"Oh. That's where I was too late, is it? Keep that modest opinion of yourself, Andree. One sees it too seldom these days. And now I'm sending you home. See? Allez. You've no right out at this hour."

She laughed, swaying against the blast; provocative; lawlessly daring.

"You no my keeper, Corp'ral Heriot," she cried.

The drink in Dick flushed his brain. He followed her two steps. Then he turned.

"Get on home with you, Andree," he said, and faced the knives of the wind again. For it was necessary to discover at the Mission the exact time when the two men had been there.

It was two hours before he came back to Tempest.

"Ogilvie doesn't appear to be on earth," he said. "But I guess he hasn't had time to get under it. We'll make some inquiries of Mr. Robison in the morning, though I don't know if we'll get much out of him. There was an hour between their calls at the Mission."

"Robison might have waited for him," suggested Tempest, and Dick laughed.

"More likely to have waited for Grange's Andree," he said. "I met her coming home alone."

"Andree!"

Tempest reddened. He hated to think of Andree in connection with those men, and in his heart the time was already ripening when he should take her from all such things as could rub the bloom off her young girlhood.

"U-m-m," grunted Dick, rubbing the frozen snow out of his hair. "Wild little devil she is, too. May as well question her again, anyway."

And then Tempest turned on him in a swift blaze of anger.

"I suppose it is hardly likely that you should keep your respect for women when you have lost it for yourself," he said.

Dick stared. Then he laughed, low and softly. He put no personal application into this. He was not fastidious, but he would not have troubled about Grange's Andree, and the idea that Tempest might do so would have been absolutely impossible of conception. But he believed that he saw in this Tempest's old impossible ideals of human nature.

"Don't fret," he said. "You have probably annexed all the superfluous amount in the universe. Anyway, I think I'm going to ask some questions to-morrow."

But although Grey Wolf to its last man searched the woods in the blinding snow next day; although Robison underwent a severe cross-examination in the barrack-office; although Dick questioned Andree privately until she stooped and bit his hand and fled, leaving him cursing, no one found Ogilvie. He was gone: gone like the dead leaves of fall that lay under the snow to decay; and neither art or chance nor anything else gave him back to Grey Wolf to tell what he had done with a certain memorandum of the Royal North-West Mounted Police.

CHAPTER V.

"WE GENERALLY DON'T."

"I GUESS that'll take him goin' some to figure it out," said Poley in a pious content.

Kennedy straightened from pulling up the last sled-strap; breathed heavily on his hands to make them bend sufficiently to go back into the fur gloves; beat them together, and said:

"Well, *I* guess Dick'll be handin' out trouble to you in a minit, all right, all right."

Poley peered sulkily over the collar of his mangy bearskin coat at the snarling knot of giddés in the traces.

"Teach him ter make picters o' me," he said. "Wait till he starts bossin' that hound a bit. That'll larn him."

The dog-teams at Grey Wolf were drawn from "any kind o' dog as'll work," and the barrack-teams were Poley's the full summer through, descending to Tempest and Dick when work began. Poley knew them intimately; mysteriously. He communicated his opinion on the universe and his fellows to them, and last night he had told them—so far as words would go—exactly what he thought of Dick for a certain sketch of himself which was just now circulating Grey Wolf. This morning he had improved the lesson by harnessing one team in wrong order when Dick left the work half-done to go in at Tempest's call; and now he stood with Kennedy, who was over-young for skilled labour, and waited results. Dick came out briskly, pulling on his gloves. He glanced from the tangle of yelping dogs to Poley, and his smile was soft.

"Who treated you at Grange's last night, Poley?" he asked. "For I'll swear you never got as bad as this out of your own pocket."

Because Poley was known to be over-careful of his private purse Kennedy choked with laughter as Dick sprang in among the dogs; cuffing and kicking in a good-humoured savagery such as they loved. The huge short-haired Mackenzie hound was buckled into his rightful place in the lead where he proclaimed his content with head up. Sharkey, the one husky of the team, backed his vigorously-curled tail against the sled,

and along the traces between Dick strung the mongrels, quick and certainly. They stood motionless as Tempest brought the second team round the corner at a run. And then Dick slipped his feet into the snow-shoe thongs.

"Get busy," he said to Kennedy. "Mush, boys. Mush along."

He cracked the long whip once, and at the yard gate he wheeled to send Poley a parting word of cheer.

"I gave Alice another sketch of you last night, Poley," he shouted.

On the lip of the forest Dick sprang ahead to break trail; swinging his weight on alternate feet and jerking up the heel of the long shoe with the kick born of much practice. The new-fallen snow packed in the shoe-lacings and before the runners, and all Dick's endurance and great muscle-power were sternly taxed before he halted, taking heavy breaths through his nostrils, and reached his coat from the sled.

"Get down to it," he said.

Kennedy hesitated. This was his first winter trail, and he was soft.

"Suppose I get cramp, or the snow-shoe heel?" he suggested.

"Suppose you don't," said Dick with meaning, and dropped into place beside the sleds.

This trip promised all the elements that were good for Dick. There was danger, there was unusualness, there was likely to be sufficient bodily discomfort to flog quiet in him the restless passions that grew during stagnation. Early in the fall a handful of men and women had come from the States and up the water-ways, calling themselves a lost tribe of Israel, and thrusting through the wilderness in the certain expectation of finding the land of Canaan at the North Pole. Remembering a recent march of the Doukhobors in "the altogether," when the Mounted Police chased them with underclothing and much tact, Tempest had picked apart this tribe more than once. But always they had drawn together again as an eddy draws straws, drifting north all the while. Yesterday word had come through by the Indian telegraph which flashes from mouth to mouth with curious speed that Abraham, the patriarch of the tribe, was sharpening knives and preparing to offer up some Isaacs to the God who walked the sky in the coloured Northern Lights which were to lead them into Canaan.

It was for Dick to discourage Abraham, and, what would probably be much more difficult, the tribe, and to bring back such members as he thought fit. Privately he sorrowed that the process could not be left to work itself to a legitimate conclusion by means of Abraham's knives; publicly he agreed

with Tempest that there might be a big force to contend with; for the wild, hairy father of Israel had that quality which brought men to obey and follow him, and a khaki tunic and a few shiny buttons were not likely to prove of much weight there. But to Kennedy when he asked questions Dick said one thing only.

"When you've lived as long as I have you won't try to jump your fence till you come up right to it—and if you don't limber your ankles you'll get that stiff tendon before you know it."

Kennedy knew it that night when he hobbled in sharp agony through the hour of stern, breathless work, done in the eye and the teeth of the inclosing frost. Both men were red with hot young blood and sweating with labour; both wrenched from the dying day and the living cold every ounce they could get. But dark had shut down and the keen-toothed frost was on them before the tent had been pitched in the clearing shovelled out by the show-shoes, and the big fire lit, and the rawhide lacings, now rigid as iron, beaten and bent from the sledge-covers, and the outfit brought in, and the frozen white-fish, threaded six on a stick, hung in the heat to thaw out for the dogs.

Dick took kettle and frying-pan and got supper, whistling softly, with his shadow treading about him like a giant with its head against the wall of black beyond the fire-circle. On the snowy rim of the circle sat the dogs, slavering, motionless, with savage eyes drawn to pin-points that never left their master. Dick reached for the whitefish, and in a flash the welter of dogs was about him, hunger-mad. Kennedy saw the gleam of white teeth and the red of many eyes against the tall man's shoulder, and he sat still, with a sudden thrill in him that he did not care to name. But Dick beat and kicked and swore unemotionally; doling out the fish to each, and hammering the brutes apart that they might slink aside, each with his own, to bolt it with growling throat and back-looking, suspicious eyes. Then he cast away the whip, and poured the tea.

"That boar-hound is a sure enough devil," he said. "What does Poley call him?"

"Okimow," said Kennedy, continuing to rub liniment into his tendon Achilles.

"Um-m," said Dick. "'Chief,' is he?" He looked at the hound where it snuffed round the edge of things with long ears flapping. "My lad," he told it, "there isn't going to be but one chief in this outfit, and I guess that is yours truly." And then he looked at Kennedy. "I've shown you how to wrap your feet before," he said. "But I'll swear you've got your instep chafed right now. Let up and have supper. I'll fix you after."

He did, with scrupulous exactness and plain words. For a man's feet on the long trail are of infinitely more value to him than his soul or anything else. Besides, in Kennedy's case, they did not belong to him at all, but to that great organisation of which he was such a very minor part, and all this Dick made clear to him without pity or evasion. Then the fire was rebuilt, huge and glowing, with the night rounding it like a black basin full of blood; and the dogs slunk from dark to light and from light to dark again, restless as a weaver's shuttle, and unsatisfied still.

The men hung their outer clothes around the fire. Then, in their dry rough furs they lay down and slept, forgetful of the frost that was at its stealthy work about them; splitting sappy trees where their trail would pass; making brittle the steel knives at their belts; stiffening the cover-lacings and the harness, and creeping near to snatch with icy grip at the fire itself.

Twice in the night Dick rose to fling on more wood and to see the Northern Lights chasing across the sky like merry children at play. The long months at Grey Wolf had been bad for Dick. They had cramped him back into the old desires which had been too strong for him all his life. Among men he fell on men's sins instantly, and desired nothing else. But here, with the great call of the unsubdued North-West whose colours he wore vibrating through all his senses, he paused a moment on the threshold while the stars went by, and the black pines peaked their tops to point where their feet could not follow.

Dick had no desire to follow. He had no wish to be good. But he knew, with a wide-awake, grim amusement, that the delight of bringing a certain man to justice was shortly going to be weighed against the pain of hurting a certain woman.

The North Star that the sailors love swung high in the glittering night. Dick had never kept but one star true all his days, and that was the star of his own wild will. He dropped his eyes and crept back to his skins with their rough, coarse hair and their animal smell. But they were good to Dick, for they were Nature's own way of pulling him back to the verities past all the subtle creeds of yea and nay.

On the fourth night Dick bought more whitefish at a clump of tepees on the rim of a snow-spread lake that ran to the forest lip. He gave in exchange a memorandum-form where, above his scrawled name, he had set this request: "To the Hudson Bay Company. Please pay to Kewasis Eusta the sum of two dollars, and charge to general acct."

That paper would hold good all over the North-West and the old chief knew it, folding it with stiff fingers that yet had not lost cunning at trap and trigger.

"Perhaps I go to Peace River Landing," he said. "And perhaps to St. John. Ne totam goes west?"

Dick's knowledge of Cree would not string a sentence. But his hand-language presently brought him out an interpreter; a middle-aged half-breed with tan-led hair lank on his shoulders and mangy skins close to his throat. The whole camp smelt badly; it was poor and [illegible]e, and at Dick's feet a couple of children gnawed toge[illegible] a last-year's moose-bone dug out of the snow. The breed looked down on them with pride.

"Mine," he said, in the French of the half-breed West. "I have a brother who is un homme blanc."

He explained further that his brother lived in a white-man house "outside" and drank and swore after the manner that white-men use. He clung to that piece of civilization as Randal clung to his battery-key and Jennifer to her silk portières, and Dick nodded.

"You're belly-pinched, my friend," he said. "And you're old before your time. But you are a happier man than your brother. Your social problems don't keep you awake o' nights, I imagine. Now, tell me what you know of that lost tribe of Israel which has gone up into the Clear Hills to find a picturesque place to sacrifice Isaac in."

What the breed told, Dick afterwards translated to Kennedy in the tent.

"They're camped some place where they expect to make out for the winter. But they can't be hunters, for they have already traded most of their clothing here for food. I'm taking dried moosemeat along, and we can give 'em some skins if they'll wear them. But I'd like to know why nakedness and certain phases of religion go together, and I'd like to know what we're to do with that nursery when we find it."

Kennedy was rubbing his knotted calves where the last hour's cramp had caught him. But three days with Dick had taught him to endure his pains without comment, and the agonising snow-shoe ache was eased since he had learned to grease the instep and properly lace the thongs.

"Will we have to bring all the beggars in?" he demanded.

"The Lord forbid," said Dick, and laughed. "There should be four men and eleven women and six children. But we'll leave that puzzle till we come to it, I think."

On the second afternoon they came to the puzzle where a crazy knot of branch-made shacks, helped out by slabs of snow, crouched under the flank of a cliff where the spruces brooded with their wide-winged branches, snow-spread, for a roof above all.

"If they last the winter out the first Chinook will drown them," said Dick. Then he called Kennedy forward as the first dog in the camp gave tongue.

" I'm out for Abraham," he said. " But you're to look after his wives, Kennedy—as many of them as you can manage. Leave me the men."

" B-but—what can I do with 'em ? " said Kennedy in his nervous youth.

" Anything. Kiss 'em. But keep them off me. Abraham will likely show fight, and I can't be mussed up with other things."

The dogs drew into the camp and dropped panting, each where he stood. But Okimow the hound watched Dick with his red-rimmed, sagging eyes. One night those two had met for victory, even as Poley had predicted, and the dog now gave the man that proud obedience which one lord may yield anotner. Dick rubbed the wet nose as he passed Okimow.

" Good boy," he said, and strode up to a shapeless muddle of sticks and snow sealed by a wooden door that had once been the floor of a wagon. His knock on the door woke the silent camp as a bee-hive wakes at a kick. Unseen children screamed ; a woman ran out of a near-by shack and dived back. More dogs barked, and sound went calling through all the crazy structures where no man appeared to stand against these two who carried their errand in their very tread.

" Saints send that Abraham has offered up himself," said Dick, and burst the door down with his shoulder and went in.

A damp air breathed at him ; fetid, and chill and horrible. He struck a match and held it up, looking round. Then his blood suddenly ran slow. The smoke-blackened place was empty, swept naked of all that made it human habitation. And yet human habitation was there, stretched on a piece of sacking at his feet ; a still body, small and young, and but partly covered. Dick dropped on his knee with his heart thumping. He struck another match, and sought with swift eyes and fingers. There was no blood ; no mark of the knife anywhere at all. And yet the boy lay there very truly as a sacrifice ; offered up to the madness of man's beliefs as surely as though he had died by the steel on the wind-swept hill.

Dick stepped out again with lips close and eyes dangerous. Any little mercy that might have been in him was dead, and he kicked in the brush-and-snow shelters with slight ceremony, unearthing the remaining children and all the women. The women cried, clamouring to Kennedy in an unknown tongue. They were drawn by his fresh cheeks and his young eyes, and Dick laughed, watching.

" Keep your head and keep your temper," he said. " I suppose Abraham and the other bucks have gone hunting. We'll wait for them."

Kennedy never forgot that hour when Dick inspected everything in the camp that would bear inspection and much

that would not. The children followed him; dark-eyed little shaggy creatures, hopping from one foot to the other to warm their half-clad misery. The women stood apart with sullen mutterings, and their eyes were suspicious under the close-drawn shawls. Dick pushed his investigations through to the bitter end, unembarrassed. Then he came to Kennedy.

"They live like beasts," he said. "But they likely can make out. They have food and warmth. I guess I'll have to pluck the patriarch, though. His doings savour mildly of insanity." He flung up his head, with the listening look in his eyes. "Here they come," he said. "And—Lord, they've got a battle-chant like the South Sea Islanders."

Down the narrow trail that gave to the naked woods four men swung into the clearing with the white spray breaking from their snow-shoes. Moose-meat hung from their shoulders in great lumps; grey coarse stuff, dark with its blood. Two were weedy weaklings who shambled, looking sideways. The third walked like a hunter, with a Winchester crooked in his arm, and his keen eyes glancing. Abraham led, chanting what was probably an Old Testament war-song. His grey beard, stiffened by frost, blew into points over each shoulder; the moose-pelt girded about him, trailed, congealing in bloody lumps of fat. His eyes were wild, the toss of his great arms was wild, and Dick slid the revolver round in his belt, speaking curtly to Kennedy.

"Keep your head *and* your temper. And don't shoot till you know there's no other way."

The Mounted Policeman who brings his prisoner in dead has to suffer for it. Kennedy remembered, with the apple swelling in his throat as the men neared. His mind was under fire for the first time, and he began to realise that it is possible for a man to do less than make good. He sat down on the sled nervously; stood up again, and heard the hound growl where it lay with muzzle on stretched paws.

Dick walked three steps and saluted; made another step, and the barrel of a second Winchester shone among the folds of the moose-pelt. Kennedy began to feel sick, for he knew that ten-shot automatic rifle, and he saw Dick walk straight up to it with unflinching feet. But then he could not see, as Dick saw, the wavering in those red eyes of insanity. Abraham quivered; swerved; made a break for the woods, and Dick swung like a flash and leapt after him.

"Hold the others," he shouted. And the raw, sappy youth jerked forward his revolver and covered the three with shaking hand and heart that quailed as sound died out in the forest.

It was the first searing in the boy's soul of the claims made on manhood, and he stood alone in the sudden dumb silence,

striving to make his face look bold. The two weaklings dropped in the snow. The third stood, holding him eye to eye, and the rifle was flung forward along his wrist. The women whimpered, afraid to scream ; but the children crawled up to the hunters, dragging at the raw meat. And out of the forest where the grey of dusk drifted there came no sound.

Kennedy's breath caught in great gulps. An insane man occasionally has the strength of ten, and if that maniac came back alone—something at the back of his head said eternally : " I won't run. By ——, I won't run."

Then he looked down at the hound, straining in the harness. With a gasp of understanding he loosed him, holding the steel menace still, and Okimow shot across the clearing like a brown log launched into space. The grip of numb dread lessened in Kennedy, and he realised that the cold was eating into his bones, and that, in the frosty metallic light, the held-up men looked grey.

By signs he got them moving, and the four took the tread-mill trail over the narrow clearing, round after round ; the white boy with the blue scared eyes driving the swarthy, shaggy men of alien tongue and breed.

Shivering and complaining the women made fires, and presently the smell of roast moose-flesh stirred Kennedy's vitals until he shut his nostrils against it. And the tension of fear and hunger and weariness grew. It had grown to the edge of hysteria when Dick came back, walking heavily. He was half-stripped in the bitter cold, and he staggered as he swung up his fur artiki from the sled and bisected Kennedy's march.

" Okimow's watching Abraham," he said. " I left him most of my dunnage. Get those men over to the fires and feed. Sharp ! We've got to go after him."

Kennedy asked one question as his teeth met in the smoking meat.

" Did Okimow help any ? " he said. And Dick answered, sitting with Abraham's rifle across his knees :

" Just about saved my life, I guess."

That was all that Kennedy ever knew in words of the struggle in the forest ; but imagination told him a little more when they lifted the bound man on to the sled in the dark, and Dick's clipped tones of exhaustion bade him stand clear of the snapping jaws and the writhing, taloned hands. All that had been man in Abraham had given way, and he foamed like an animal in a trap ; raving in an unknown tongue, and glaring with starting eyes.

Dick showed neither pity nor horror. He engineered the burdened sled into a shack ; covered it warm for the night, and left it. Then he and Kennedy took sentry-go in turns

until the dawn broke. And at dawn they buried the Isaac of a later history; baring the ground of snow and building the body in against wolf and coyote with rocks brought with great labour. For the earth rang like iron, denying entrance to the earth that lay placid above it. Then Dick straightened, wiping the sweat from his face.

"Time we pulled out," he said. "They've got one *man*, and he's a hunter. They'll do till we can get 'em out in spring."

But Kennedy halted shamefaced by the grave.

"Perhaps you wouldn't want ter say somethin'," he mumbled.

"What?" Dick stared. Then humorous contempt twitched his lips.

"Say anything you feel like, son," he said. "And take your time. I imagine it would come better from you than me."

He went back to the shack where the big hound watched Abraham and the remainder of the lost tribe of Israel watched the hound and listened to the whirling words of the pinioned man. And an hour later began that long nightmare that walked with them through the eight days into Grey Wolf; days that two men remembered long after the third had gone to find his senses again in another world.

There were hours when the man on the sled turned livid from cold, and Dick had to let him up to keep life in him, locking the handcuffs to his own belt for safety. There were hours when Abraham lay rigid, with clenched teeth through which they struggled to force food in vain. There were hours too when the blizzard caught them; so that men and dogs bowed to its might, and crouched under the half-pitched tent with the raving man at their ears until the storm was spent and they rose again, recounting their lessening food-kit.

But to Kennedy the edge of all horror was reached in the times when Dick set the maniac on his feet, and ran beside him, or struggled against him, or whirled with him in a drunken, hideous dance, according to Abraham's whim, in order that life might be kept in this huge creature whom earth did not want and dared not lose. Dick's own life was often in danger from the sheer brute strength of the man. He was worn from sleeplessness and exhaustion and cold, and, in later days, from hunger. A spot on his chin had been bitten black in an hour when he had no time to give thought to it. Abraham's teeth had met once in the fleshy part of his hand, and the incoming frost threatened a long, painful healing. His nerves were strong as a man's need be, but the tension was unslackening. Food ran short, and bad weather made trail-breaking needful for three ghastly days on end. Kennedy worked well and uncomplainingly; but his mental and

physical fibres were not yet set, and the burden of all fell on Dick.

And then came the last night out from Grey Wolf, in an empty freighter's shack by the river. For fifty hours Abraham had refused food. He lay weak as a child by the fire, moaning until Dick loosed the rawhide that had wound him about through his last fit of violence, and left him at ease with the handcuffs only. He fell asleep then, and Dick looked with sunken eyes on Kennedy.

"I must sleep right now, if we all die for it," he said. "You can have Okimow help you; but I believe he's fagged out. Give me two hours, and then call me."

Within two hours another than Kennedy very nearly called Dick, when a gasping smother of human hair pressed down on him, and somewhere in the dark he heard the mad jaws clashing. He was full awake and alert with all the instinct of self-preservation; and, like reality piercing through a nightmare, the click of Kennedy's revolver-hammer came to him.

"Don't shoot," he shouted, and fumbled for the throat-grip with his maimed hand as Kennedy flung himself on the two.

Dick said nothing when Abraham was laid at last like a moss-baby on the earth, and the fire was made up, and Okimow's bristles quieted. But when Kennedy floundered into self-accusation he swore impatiently.

"Sit up and make out the report of this capture," he said. "That'll keep you awake."

"I don't guess I know how——"

"You've seen a Blue Book, haven't you? Get busy and shut up."

The shack fell silent. Outside, the world was infinitely quiet and far in its sweeping wastes of snow. The wood wheewed and crackled, spitting suddenly when a lump of snow in a broken fork caught the heat. Abraham lay still, breathing thickly. Kennedy, with his heavily-stockinged feet thrust out to the fire, wrote laboriously and lengthily, and Dick watched the flames and remembered this game which he was playing with Ducane as goal. He spoke at last abruptly.

"Give me that paper, Kennedy. I'll put it in my pocket-book."

"I'm not through yet——"

"Holy smoke! What are you writing? A book? How much have you got?"

"Only four pages and a bit."

"It'll go into four lines. Tear that stuff out and chuck it on the fire. Now, write as I tell you. 'Sir,—I have the honour to report that the maniac Abraham—surname unknown—who headed a company of fanatics calling them-

selves a lost tribe of Israel, was lately captured by Constable Kennedy and myself at their settlement in the Clear Hills. Constable Kennedy, who has recently joined, behaved with commendable coolness under rather trying circumstances. I have the honour to be, Sir, your obedient servant——'"

"Lord!" said Kennedy sharply. "You don't want to rub it in like that."

"You'll make a man all right when you grow up," said Dick. "And then you will understand that a man only talks about the things he doesn't do. What were you going to make out of this little game home in Grey Wolf?"

Under the quizzical eyes Kennedy burned with the red of shame.

"All right," said Dick, and laughed. "But I guess I wouldn't. We generally don't, you know."

But this moral lesson did not prevent him from leaving Kennedy at the barracks when Abraham was disposed of, and straightway seeking at Grange's that brandy for which his soul craved. And so it was that Jennifer, coming later into the little back-room at Grange's, whither Dick had retired with his glass, found him asleep there. He lay back in the big chair, with one leg outstretched to the heat of the stove, and melted snow dripping from the black stockings rolled up to the knee, and the white ones rolled down over the moccasins. His fur coat and his cap were flung on the floor, and his unshaven chin was sunk in his tunic-collar. One hand, knotted in a rough bandage, hung over the chair-arm, and the whole of him told out that slackness of fibre which is born of bitter, unresting strain.

Jennifer knew just a little concerning that strain, for Kennedy's youth would not be denied some heroics. And yet the reserve of his new-come manhood had set his tongue rather to such things as the searing of Dick's wound by a red-hot bolt and the pulling of the teams in a blizzard than to his own glory. And of the things which were the real essentials he had neither the wit nor the understanding to speak. But Jennifer was learning to interpret knowledge by that which is not said. She moved a little from the slow-breathing man with his dark hair damp with sweat and the deep lines round his mouth, and she looked from the dulling window on the lives whereto such men came.

There had been a policeman of the West who bore his man south from Chipewyan against the full blast of the winter; a maniac prisoner and a hard-bitten officer who paid for those days of strain by the loss of his own senses. There was one at whom a "Cowboy Jack pointed a gun against section 105 of the Criminal Code," and who "unfortunately destroyed one chair" in the struggle of capture. There was the rider

of the prairie-patrol who brought the wife and children of a settler from the stinging smoke and the flames that ringed them as surely as ever fires ringed in Brunhild. There was that other who walked in the serenity which is given of God or devils through the Indian camp squatted in vivid objection across the projected line of a railroad, and dispersed the thunder and gathering lightning by the simple methodical directness with which he kicked down the tepees, one by one, in an unbroken silence. And there were a thousand more whose life-work lay, bald and unvarnished, in the blue-backed Annual Reports which the world never reads.

There was something of the old Norse grim humour in these naked stories. To him who encountered Cowboy Jack the breaking of the chair was the vital point. Jennifer laughed softly. These men did not know what they were doing—for their land, for their nation. They did not know.

She looked again at Dick. Already slackness had gone out of him. One knee was bent, one hand gripped up as though his nature watched for the sudden call. Jennifer could understand that. It was the birth-mark of more than the roving men, for all the children of a new land carry it; carry the force and the charged tenseness and the untiring alertness which makes for conquest, for the wresting of something from nothing, for the building of nations in the land they hold by birth and purchase and hard-won exchange. And yet, in such as these was surely some throw-back to the men who came in with Prince Rupert; some blood of the lawless, of unauthorized passions and whims, of the temper that will not get into line, of the daring that swings a man to the front rank where the big runs roar.

Dick stirred a little, opening his eyes. They were heavy with a great sleep as they lifted to Jennifer where she stood against the grey window.

"You there still," he said. "But why did they call you Jennifer? That is Cornish for Guinevere—and she left Arthur."

His voice told that he groped yet on the hazy edge of dreams. Jennifer moved nervously; and then he sprang up, locked suddenly into his senses again.

"I beg your pardon," he said. "I was sleeping. And I'm disgracefully dirty. I have just come in."

"I know. Oh, you have had a terrible, terrible time."

"Kennedy is very young," apologised Dick. "You must excuse him."

"But—didn't you?"

"Not at all, thank you. It was an extremely ordinary patrol. But I can't forgive myself for coming before you in these clothes."

"Oh, how could you think I'd mind that! I'm glad always——"

Dick skilfully effaced the sentence before she realised it. His eyes smiled as he paraphrased Tempest's accusation of a few weeks back.

"Men say hard things of me, Mrs. Ducane," he said. "But won't you concede me still the possession of a little respect for women and for myself?"

"Oh," said Jennifer, and reddened. "Don't. It—it hurts to—to think a man would need to speak in that way—ever."

"I'm sorry," he said instantly. "A man who has been much in rough places forgets sometimes what a delicate instrument a woman is."

He stretched his hands out, dirty bandage and all.

"Look at those," he said. "Fit for a drum or a barrel-organ, perhaps. But for the lute or the harp! No!"

The easy courtesy of his manner belied his words, and he shook his head, smiling. To Jennifer it was the daring of life, the ring of the bold heart and merry that had ever called out her own heart to meet it. She had thought that she answered that call in Ducane, and the knowledge that it never was there was a live pain that would not cease. But this unshaven man, with the smell of wet wool in his stockings and clothes, and of drying mooseskin on his feet, brought her near it again until she felt the hot breath of the world in her face, and the reckless laugh of the world in her eyes.

Dick struck in her a spark that Tempest could not, nor Ducane. For he did not shield her womanhood as Tempest was wont to do, nor offend it as Ducane often did. And he took her out at last to Ducane with the passion of life welling up in her for the things that were done and to do. Ducane looked at her as they swept over the frozen lake where a sunset laid golden bars.

"What was that buck saying to you?" he demanded.

"Nothing in particular," said Jennifer, and reddened at words and tone.

"I won't have you see too much of those fellows," said Ducane, and pulled her close in his arm. "Do you hear me, Jenny?"

"What do you mean?" said Jennifer, and her voice was concentrated.

"Oh, you know well enough," Ducane laughed. "Play with them all you like," he said. "But don't you play with me. See? I won't have it."

The knowledge that these last months had given her controlled Jennifer. She reached her mittened hand to stroke his cheek.

"Harry, dear, don't you sometimes forget that I'm your wife?" she said.

Ducane's rough bear's hug brought her close to his rough bear's heart.

"No, Jenny. No, my girl. I guess I never forget that. But I'm worried, Jenny. I'm worried. And I want you all the time. If you went back on me, by——"

She silenced his lips with her soft fingers.

"I will never go back on you, my husband," she said, and they drove on, unspeaking.

Ducane had her hand under the rug, clinging as a coward or a child might do. Jennifer looked straight out to where the white hill and the scattered forest grew plain to meet them. But she saw only a lean, tired, firm face, white under the wind-burn, and a brown hand that clenched strongly even in sleep.

When Dick returned to the bar he saw Grange's Andree feeding the young moose in the hotel yard. Her laugh called Dick's eyes to her. And then he stopped and stared. For it was Tempest who held the armful of branches from which Andree plucked her handfuls.

"What the devil——" he said. Then he laughed and went in. "For if Tempest sets out to make a saint out of that young sinner he'll have to take off his coat to it," he said.

Tempest was not trying to make a saint of Andree, because he did not guess at the need for it. Through the white light of his own nature he saw her; discovering in her beauties that were never there; gold that was only dross; strong-burning fires that other men knew for will-o'-the-wisp. But, because a man fashions his own heaven and hell, and his own beliefs from the texture of his own heart, Tempest was not like to find this out. For a man is never blinder than when he is quite sure that he sees.

After Ogilvie had gone, no man knew where, leaving his corner of Hotchkiss' shack empty, Hotchkiss had married one of the town-bred girls from Grange's and Andree had taken her place. This arrangement appeared satisfactory to all concerned until Tempest came in from a three days' trip to Lower Landing and found Andree bearing the little oval dishes with their ill-cooked food over the big bare room to a noisy tableful of freighters.

Andree had not forgotten how he halted inside the door, straight and tall in his uniform, and looked at her with eyes as straight—and more stern than she cared to see. For Tempest was just now the North Star in her universe, and her compass swung to him as naturally as it would by and by swing to another. She flinched from his glance as though it had been a whip. Then her tread grew stately and her eyes

cold, and she moved among the burring talk and the rough laughter and the clatter of plates and knives like the handmaid of the gods which Tempest would have her be. He spoke low when she brought the food to the table where he sat alone.

"What do they mean by letting you do this?" he asked.

"Gertrude got married yesterday," she said. "And I do not mind."

"But I mind," he said. And because it was the first time he had taken that tone with her she went away, half-flattered, half-afraid.

He was saying the same thing now, as he shed the last spruce-branches on the snow and thrust past the long poking fiddle-head to come near her.

"And I won't have it," he ended sternly. "I had to turn a man out last night. If he had spoken to you——"

Andree looked away. She knew dimly that it would not please Tempest to hear how well she could take care of herself when she chose.

"But it is so often that they are good boys," she said.

"I know. They're usually all right. But I hate to have you wait on them. And I hate to have you wait on me." He came nearer yet. "I wonder if you guess how I feel when I have to sit still and let you wait on me," he said.

She heard the note in his voice. But she could not read it. She saw his eyes. But she did not know what they said.

"I—don't understand," she told him.

The red and purple sunset was gone, leaving greyness. A thick mist swept up the lake and into the yard, and beside them the moose was coughing. She herself seemed growing vague, indistinct. And then he caught her hands, bringing a sharp virile note into the haze.

"Andree," he said. "Will you marry me?"

She jumped, with a cry of anger and fear.

"Non, non," she gasped. "Nemoweya. I do not want to go marree. I do not want."

The breaking of her careful English warned him. He stood back on the instant.

"Why, don't be frightened, dear," he said. "You don't imagine I'd do a thing to frighten you, do you? But I need you to think about this, Andree. I have thought of it ever since I first saw you in the trail."

"So?" she said, with a long indrawn breath.

She stared at him, with her brain working slowly behind the soft eyes. She had no desire for marriage. Always with Andree, "two boys were better than one, and three boys were better than two." But Robison had been troublesome of late, and it might be well to let Tempest step between to take the brunt. It did not run so in her mind. That held no more

than the animal instinct of getting behind something that would shield it from danger. She stood very still in the mist that rimed her curls and her close-drawn hood and pushed long warning fingers between her and the man. The very silence that she used with Tempest waked his reverence. To him it showed a girl-heart finely tuned, and to be as finely touched. He did not guess that she had just enough wit to know it for her only weapon with him. The moose stamped impatiently in the snow. Then it flung restlessly round the yard, with neck laid back so that the budding horns made a line with the shoulders, and its big splay feet swinging noiselessly. It looked huge and threatening as it loomed in the mist, passed and came again. And Tempest had no knowledge of how the wild heart in that still girl called to it.

"I want you, dear," he said, gently. "And I think you likely want me. Everything needs its opposite—which is its complement. You won't understand that. But everything is made dual, Andree. Light needs darkness, sweet needs bitter, strength needs weakness, man needs woman. It is only the contrast—the nearness of the other—which can make the one grow to its highest. I love my work, God knows. But it has not been enough for me since I found you. I think it can never be enough for me again."

His hands were ungloved where they came over her gloved ones. Andree looked down on them. Those brown, sinewy, nervous pieces of flesh and blood could strike her out of life by the sudden contraction and swing of their steel muscles and tendons. He was the strong animal; stronger perhaps than Robison, and infinitely less alarming. She lifted his hands suddenly and kissed them. It was her tribute to the man-strength of him, and that was all that she cared for or understood. But to Tempest it was a glorious act that brought the blood to his forehead. He bowed it down on the joined hands.

"God bless you," he said unsteadily. "God bless you, Andree."

Dick, half-asleep over the mess-room fire, was startled by the light which still shone in Tempest's face when he came in to smoke a pipe much later. But no power short of actual proof could have made him connect it with Grange's Andree. He blinked up, half-derisive, half-envious.

"Have you been on the mountain-tops again, you old beggar?" he said. Then, underbreath, he mumbled part of a verse that drifted to him out of the nowhere—

"A veil 'twixt us and Thee, dread God.
A veil 'twixt us and Thee;
Lest we should hear too clear, too clear,
And unto madness see"

CHAPTER VI.

"THE YOUNG GOD FREY."

"HAH-*yah*-AH-AH! Hah-*yah*-ah-ah! Hah-*yah*——"

Ducane dashed his cup down in the saucer with a force that spattered the tea across the tablecloth.

"What in the name of all things d'you let that old fool into the house for?" he demanded.

Jennifer laughed the little soft laugh that soothed him always.

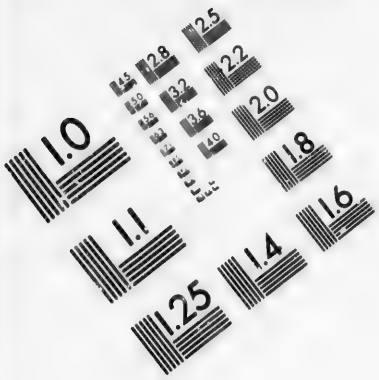
"It's just a thanksgiving for his breakfast, dear. I told Louisa to bring him in. It must have been below zero in his shack this morning."

"Pshaw! You can't freeze a Cree Indian. Good Lord, Jenny! Stop him! And that devil's tom-tom of his, too. Tell him——"

Jennifer went out quickly. Ducane's nerves had been a ragged edge of late, and she could not draw from him the reason why. But she shielded and eased and softened him wherever her wit could do it; and if the strain showed in her face it was not Ducane who would notice it, nor yet the two in the rough draughty kitchen behind the house.

Jennifer stood a moment in the door. At the broad blackened bench running along one side of the place the slow, clumsy half-breed girl was splashing greasy water as she scraped a pot. She was a living thorn in Jennifer's flesh; a primitive thing that could not be taught and that never lost its temper. Up in the dark rough rafters were thrust broken snow-shoes, a special hand-sled of Ducane's, a couple of bear-skins of his own curing, and many other things which belonged to the days before Jennifer came and which she had not had the courage to touch. Before the glowing stove sat the old Cree, astride of a box. His store-clothes hung loosely on his gaunt, long body. His black hair, like frayed-out carpet, fell back from the blind, seamed old face as he pointed his nose to the roof and bayed like a wolf in the night, keeping time with the tom-tom beat.

"Hah-*yah*-ah-ah! Hah——"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Jennifer touched the bowed shoulder.

"Meewahsin, Son-of-Lightning," she said. "Very good."

Son-of-Lightning's bony knuckles dropped from the tuneless little drum. He twisted to meet the voice.

"Meewahsin?" he said, and showed all his tobacco-blacked teeth in the grin which he gave no one but Jennifer. "Aha, Tapwa?"

"Certainly," said Jennifer. "It is truly very good." She looked at Louisa. "Tell him it is time to go out and cut kindling," she said.

Louisa interpreted in the swift guttural mutters that seem to have no terminals. The old man raised himself by sections, and Jennifer pulled her coat from the passage-peg, stepping out with him into the crisp brilliance of the spring morning.

All the world was vividly, crystally new. Under the breath of the Chinook which came eager and warm from the Rockies the trees had sloughed their winter covering, standing in delicate grey tracery against the dazzling sky. In this atmosphere the houses over at Grey Wolf stood distinct, each one, with smoke feathering straightly from the chimneys. Jennifer could see the glint of a beaded moccasin on a man by the hotel door. She could catch the crack of a quirt as Kennedy went up the street on the piebald barrack pony. Snowbirds were calling gladly down the lake where the ice was thinning; and against the clearing fences and the heaps of melting snow sunshine was splintering its lances gaily. All about the feet of Spring moved; growing nearer, warmer. The air was full of promise; of life, of things to be and do, and Jennifer's blood ran riot with the joy of it as she thrust open the door of Son-of-Lightning's shack.

If the world outside was resurrection that shack most surely was the grave. But its desolation of sacking-bunk, ragged blankets, old lumber, and almost audible smell troubled her less this morning. The day was too boisterously glad. Besides, Son-of-Lightning loved it. He trod past her with the unerring feet of the blind who know their path; squatted on the floor like some furry animal; reached his knife from a tie in the wall and a dried stick from the floor, and began slicing slivers for firewood. He paused once to try the blade on his thumb, and Jennifer went away, shutting the door on the sharp, keen air. Day or dark were alike to Son-of-Lightning, and he was smoke-dried beyond all hurt from the smells.

Round the house the snow was pounded into holes and kicked to ridges by the passing of men and horses. Where the crisp surface spumed into spray about their bodies a big husky-dog was fighting two of Ducane's sled-dogs. They were bred too close to the wolf for Jennifer to care for or to heed the issue. Everything belonging to Ducane was savage

and rough and unlovely as himself; everything except Jennifer. She watched them a moment with her dark brows drawn together. That husky dog was Robison's, and always his coming left Ducane inflamed with excitement or irritable with a hidden fear.

She went into the house, hearing Ducane call her from the passage.

"Jenny! Bring another cup—and some more bacon. Robison's here."

This was not the first time Ducane had bade her wait on the breed, and her temper began to stir. She gave two orders to Louisa, and met Ducane in the narrow side-passage hung with his guns and fishing-gear.

"Louisa will bring them," she said quietly. "You don't want to make me wait on Robison, do you?"

Ducane was irritable already.

"By George," he exploded. "I guess you'll leave your Toronto airs behind you up here, my girl. If Robison is good enough for me——"

"He is good enough for me. Is that what you mean?"

Under her eyes Ducane fidgeted.

"What's the matter with him?" he said sulkily.

"Nothing, perhaps—in his proper place. But his place is not in my sitting-room, and you have brought him there more than once. Nor is it in the dining-room when I am there. You would not dare attempt to make him my equal if he had not a greater hold over you than he should have."

Ducane went purple. All his bullying, blustering nature flared up.

"By ——, you'll do as I tell you," he said.

"I will not," said Jennifer, and he saw the steel in her eyes.

For a moment he gasped. Then he swore again, low and in admiration.

"You've got sand, you little spitfire," he said. "You've got sand." He stared at her still. "I reckon you could jolly the lot of 'em if you were put to it, eh? They wouldn't cut any ice off you."

She shivered under the eager speculation in his eyes.

"Harry—dear—" she said, and reached her hand up to touch his cheek.

He caught it, crushing his lips to the palm.

"You'd do anything for me, Jenny?" he whispered. "Anything, if I needed it? You know I love you, Jenny. I love you."

Neither the man nor the woman knew yet if he loved himself better. Jennifer drew her hand gently away.

"Anything I could," she said. "You know that. Now, go back to Robison. Louisa has taken in the bacon.'

Ducane went, and there was the lift of eagerness in his feet. For he had a whole new formula to work on; one close at hand; one which he had never thought of before. Robison looked at him with curiosity. He did not understand this man who had gone into a game for men to play and who was now afraid of it. For long they talked very low over the table-corner. Then Ducane pushed dishes and silver aside, and brought some papers from a locked drawer in a wall-cabinet.

"When the first boat goes down to Chipewyan we go too," he said. "I want some information and some photographs about that country."

"Oh," Robison rubbed his broad flat nose. "Told yer Grey Wolf was only a nibble at the beginning."

"I could have told you that. Last week I heard from a fellow in England who'd been reading some of our literature. It came under cover to Winnipeg, of course. I'm replying direct to him. He's going to have that bit of land on the Peace that you bought from Ras Taylor."

Ras Taylor was the breed whose scrip-land Robison had bought. Incidentally Ras Taylor had also been very drunk at intervals for some months. But it was known that Robison had been very good to him and had paid him in advance for part of his next year's trapping, Ras being too deeply in debt to the Hudson Bay Company to receive grace from them.

Robison nodded. This thing had been done before, although the Winnipeg Company which supplied the literature would not have warmly approved. But neither Ducane nor Robison had thought of seeking encouragement from them.

"Hand over the feller's letter, an' yer answer," said Robison. He took pains to know that Ducane reserved all his treachery for the other members of the Company, and he read the letters with deliberation.

"Looks all right," he said, and tossed them back. "Ducane, what's that Dick Heriot doing across here so often?"

"How should I know? I can't stop him or he'd suspect something."

"Do you think he ain't suspectin' everybody in Grey Wolf ever since he first got wind o' this? I heard all about him long before he come here. But you've got to watch out that he doesn't do more than suspect. See?"

Ducane's fat, ruddy face sagged and paled.

"He can't suspect. How should he? We never have——"

"Well, take care as we never do, that's all. I'm lookin' for a chance ter git even with him, but it's long a-comin'." He pulled a flat sheet of paper from his mooseskin wallet. "See that?" he said. "That's what he done to me, the——"

Ducane picked up Dick's sketch of the wood-buffalo, which

was Robison. It was a little blurred by damp and rubbing, but it was unmistakable, and cruelly clever. Ducane laughed, holding it up against the light.

"By Jove, he's got his own idea of a joke," he said. "How long have you had this?"

"Never you mind." Robison leaned forward suddenly. "There's writin' on that other side. Faint pencil, an' I never saw it before. Hand it here."

He half-snatched it and read the notes in Tempest's clear writing below the "Memorandum. Royal North-West Mounted Police Force. Form No. ——"

"I never saw this before," he said weakly. "I never saw this before."

"What is it?" Ducane took it and read it. Then he sprang up with a gasp. Deadly fear had caught him, making him cringe at the far-off threat.

"They're after us," he cried. "Lord! They're *after* us. They know what we're at."

There was sweat on his face. He brought a bottle and glasses to the table, poured himself a stiff nip, and dropped back in his chair, holding his glass with a shaking hand. Robison was watching in the impenetrable gravity of an elephant. Fear was a thing outside his understanding.

"Everyone knows Ras Taylor took scrip last year an' sold to me this," he said. "Don't make such a row."

"They wouldn't have noted it unless they were going to do something, would they? By ——, perhaps they've got the whole thing already. I shall clear out. I can't stand this. They'll get me, the brutes. They'll *get* me."

Robison's elemental brain felt dimly that he was rather more ignored than courtesy demanded.

"And where do I come in?" he demanded. "I reckon I'm as near caught as you, any day. But I reckon I can lie my way out of it so far. An' so must you."

His little red eyes were sharp on Ducane. It did not occur to him that any man could baulk over the telling of lies, for he did not know that this is one of the limitations which usually goes with the honour of being born a gentleman.

"It won't come to that. If this damned Heriot was spiked——"

Ducane halted suddenly, thinking of Jennifer. His face lightened a little, and he sat still. Robison heaved himself up, standing with great arms hanging, more like an ape than ever.

"We'll go on as we've gone," he said. "I'm not goin' out of this game till I have to run for it. There's money in it all right."

"I won't do any more," Ducane looked up defiantly. "I won't go up to Chipewyan. I——'

"Yes, you will, too." Robison thrust his hairy face close. "You don't go back on me if I know it," he said.

"I won't go to Chipewyan," cried Ducane. "I'm going to clear out of Grey Wolf right away. I'm not fool enough to be caught——"

"You'll go to Chipewyan," said Robison. "An' you'll stay on here till we're through with our little corner. See? I'm goin' to make enough out o' my pickin's to set me up. You've scooped more than your share so far. But you'll give me fair dues now, an' you won't pull out till I'm ready."

His rough voice was lowered and he scarcely moved. But Ducane recognised the enormous brute force which will fight for what it wants, regardless of consequences. If he played false with Robison the man would kill him. He had known that for some time, but he shivered and cowered under the knowledge again.

"Heriot is a dog after cunning work," he said. "He'll get me——"

"We'll light out before that. He doesn't know much or he'd have been on to us before now. This picture is near five months old. Never you mind how I know that. And you keep your mouth shut. You don't tell your wife things? You swore you didn't."

"I don't. No. But——"

"You'll do as I say," said Robison quietly, "or I guess you'll likely get hurt, Mr. Ducane."

Ducane fingered the sketch aimlessly, and Jennifer, passing the window with the gladness of the spring day in her eyes and her feet, wondered at the sullen fear on his face. But she pushed thought of him and of Robison from her as she climbed the hill where an old Indian woman was beating the frost from some fish-nets as she laid them in the sun. By the Indian burying-ground the spirit-offerings of old hardware were beginning to take shape again below the ridge-pole c[illegible]erings, and all the grey tender branches of the birchwood along the hillside were blushing with new life. Jennifer knocked the snow from a brown saskatoon branch and laughed at it.

"Very soon you will be young again," she told it, and looked down into the coulée beyond, where two shacks lay like black thumb-marks on white paper. Jennifer caught her breath. One of those shacks held the ghost of the woman who was a weetigo. The other shack was Florestine's. Jennifer had seen Florestine in Grey Wolf; a tall, handsome breed with a very small baby in a moss-bag. Now the baby was dead, killed yesterday by Florestine's own hand, and in some horrible way this was connected with the weetigo. Jennifer turned sick, remembering how Ducane had been buttering his toast as he spoke of it that morning.

"The police will get hold of it to-day," he said. "Manslaughter, at the very least, of course. Maybe the girl was justified. She had to work for the kid."

"Where is her husband?" asked Jennifer, and Ducane laughed uproariously.

"Who knows," he said, and Jennifer's heart had surged up in a great wave of pity for Florestine.

She felt the reflex of that pity now in this silent world where tragedy had a way of lying so nakedly to the eye. Then, along the line of trail that snaked round to Grey Wolf, she saw something black that swung near, and very fast. A flash of light struck on brass harness; the stout lines of the barrack-sleigh shaped familiarly; and sharply, almost without her knowledge, Jennifer plunged down the snow-slope to reach the shack which was Florestine's before the chain of that unbreakable patrol should loop round it and pull it in.

On the level the way was rough with little snow-graves that buried hay-heaps, battered tins, broken harness, and loose lumber. But she stumbled over them with her heart in her throat; reached the crazy door first, and turned with her arm flung out as though to bar it against Tempest where he came up the trail behind her.

"You—you can't go in there," she said desperately.

Tempest's lips twitched in a brief smile. There was no door in all the North-West dared deny him entrance when he wished it. But his eyes were grave, for it was errands like this that bled the heart-blood out of him.

"What made you come?" he said gently.

"She is sorry." Jennifer's voice dropped to whispered pleading. "She never meant it. She did it just in a moment because she was so tired, and it cried so. She never meant to do it."

"Please——" said Tempest, and his eyes contracted. The matter was painful enough without this.

"She doesn't know any better," said Jennifer. "She only knows about the things that frighten her—about the woman who was a weetigo and who came in the night and wanted the baby—and the winds that make noises—and the husband who was unkind to her. They couldn't have her at the Mission because you *know* they are so short of money—and she was all alone—and the weetigo woman told her to do it—and she is so sorry."

It was the one woman's heart interpreting through this girl the mother-love of all women. Tempest recognised it. But he laid his hand on the latch.

"Do you think I have no pity for her?" he said. "But I must go in. I am as much under the law as she is.'

"The law!" cried Jennifer, and bit her teeth together. "Oh! I think I hate the law."

"You are thinking of man's law," said Tempest, and smiled a little. "I wasn't meaning only that."

He pulled up the latch and stepped over the threshold with that quiet manner of his which seemed to carry the hush of finality with it. Jennifer heard the half-choked cry as Florestine saw him, and it drove home the truth of his words. In order that the world may go on sin must be punished, rooted out, crushed into death. Nature demands it, and opposite the neglect of this law she sets the extinction and the degradation of the race. Jennifer stood for a little in the great white day with bowed head. Then she followed Tempest into the shack.

It was very cold in the shack, for Florestine had made no fire since the baby died. It smelt of moose-skin and coal-oil and all airless greasiness and wood-smoke. Near the burnt-out lamp on the rough table lay a pair of half-finished moccasins with the strips of white doe-skin and the litter of beads and gay silks. Florestine had been working on them for an order when the peevish crying of the baby had started her up from the box overturned on the earth floor. There were pans and dirty pots about; a pair of snow-shoes flung off in a corner; the black shawl Florestine wore over her head when she went to Grey Wolf, and, where the light of the day swamped the darkness, Florestine on a stool, holding her baby, and Tempest kneeled on one knee beside her.

Jennifer halted, half-ashamed. For Florestine needed no rescue from the mercilessness of the law-bringer. Tempest was stroking the brown scrap of flesh that made the infinitely cold baby cheek with a gentle forefinger, and his tone as he spoke in his broken Cree-French was tenderness made wise.

He had drawn from her with such skill that she did not know it the few necessary words he wanted, and now he was trying to draw from her the dead child. For her long bitter journey to Fort Saskatchewan must begin in the morning. The girl was numb with the cold and dazed with hunger and terror. The ghost of the woman who was a weetigo had shrieked at her hourly, demanding the soft body as well as the life already given. She clutched it, staring at Tempest with eyes that were softening.

"Astum," said Tempest, and slid his firm hands about it. "Ah, *le petit napasis*. I take him, Florestine. So——"

A moment Florestine rebelled. Then she let go. Jennifer held her breath. There was no denying that quiet power. Tempest stood up with his light burden, and Florestine spoke.

"I want him not cry—and now I want him cry," she said in the mixed language that Tempest only understood.

And he had no answer for it, because it was the unexplainable tragedy of impatient human life in a sentence.

The grunt of runners packing in the snow came from without, sharpened by the snap of a whip as Kennedy pulled the piebald barrack pony back on its haunches. Dick ploughed through the snow to the door where Tempest met him, and Florestine's eyes followed in the dumb submission of a dog. Tempest spoke low and quickly. Both men looked at Jennifer, and then Tempest came to her.

"I am taking Florestine back with me," he said. "And you'd best go home at once, Mrs. Ducane. There's a storm coming, I fancy. Those look like snow-clouds."

Jennifer realised suddenly that the sun was gone and that a cold restless wind was plucking at the shack-corners. But she did not heed.

"Who is taking her down to Fort Saskatchewan?" she asked.

"Kennedy. To-morrow morning."

Jennifer glanced at the ruddy youth.

"Oh, will he know enough?" she said. "Will he be kind to her?"

"Why, he'll do his best," Tempest smiled. "He's a good lad. But I'll speak to him if you like."

He beckoned Kennedy.

"Mrs. Ducane is very anxious that this poor girl should be well looked after," he said. "I told her you'd do your best. Isn't that so?"

"Aha," said Kennedy, scarlet with shyness. "All right, Sergeant. Cert'nly."

Tempest's glance passed to the motionless Florestine.

"I think you would be wise to go, Mrs. Ducane," he said. "We may get bad snow out of this. You know what the spring storms are."

Jennifer went obediently, with a curious sense of impotence. These men whose ways lay so much among rough men and rough work needed no teaching from her in the matters of gentleness and forethought. She could not have handled Florestine as Tempest had done, and she believed that Tempest had made more of the storm so that she should not have the pain of seeing them take Florestine away.

Then she realised that the storm was very much more than a thing of Tempest's imagination, and along the flank of the hill she hurried with all her strength, feeling the chill bite of the wind on her face. A flake of wet snow, chill as the forerunner of a blizzard, struck her, and she lowered her head, pushing against it with her long swift snow-shoe swing. Already the distances were shortening down with the mist that brought the snow. The wind in her skirts held her back and tired her, and

the cold began to strike home to her thinly-clad body. It had been so warm this morning, she told herself. No one would have expected this. And there were four miles of bare saddle-backs before her yet. Four miles where she would catch the storm full. But she dared not go back to the shacks. There would be no one there now but the ghost of the woman who was a weetigo. All about her the trees were moaning; bending uneasily in the wind-puffs, and sloughing the snow where they could, as though in preparation for what was coming. Then the snow began in earnest. Sleety masses with the wetness of spring in them, but cold enough for mid-winter. The wind buffeted and blinded her and took her breath.

"I must go on," shs gasped. "I must. But it's so cold. It's so cold." She was sobbing in her throat; stumbling, numb, worn-out with her struggle and the grasp of the cold on her. Her skirts grew wet and dragged her down. She dropped at last; too exhausted to care, though it meant death. That wind was beating the breath out of her. And the snow was so cold. So cold.

Then strong arms came round her, and someone swung her up, holding her close, and a human voice came to her out of somewhere.

"There's a shack down here. We'll get under shelter. All right. It's all right now."

Jennifer was past words. She clung to Dick weakly as to something warm and alive. And then the tearing noisy storm was shut out with the banging of the shack door and she slid down on a pile of musty blue-joint grass. Dick was pulling his gloves off and rubbing her cheeks between his strong warm hands.

"You've half-frozen," he said. "You poor child. Why did we let you go? Why did we let you go! Is that better? I can see the blood coming back. Now your hands. And how about your feet? I'll get a fire directly. You poor child."

"I would have died," she sobbed. "I would have died if you hadn't come."

"Not you. These storms don't last long enough. But you might have got badly chilled. Wait a minute and I'll make a fire."

He brought branches with the snow knocked off them; fed a small flame in the chimney-place with the grass, and presently the fire leapt up, warm and ruddy. Jennifer was shivering and trembling, and her skirt dripped as she stood up.

"Put on my slicker," said Dick, and flung off the long yellow waterproof he wore. "And get out of those skirts at once, while I bring some more wood."

"Oh, thank you. Thank you. How good you are to me. And you came after me through that storm——"

"I'd go through more than that." He broke the sentence. "Take those wet things off," he said, and went out hurriedly.

Outside he stood still with his back to the storm, and a curious light in his eyes. Those moments when he held Jennifer in his arms had shaken him much. He seemed to feel the softness and the lightness of her there yet. Some months ago he had been startled when he first realised that Jennifer was becoming a factor in his life. Then he had been amused. He had played with the idea, letting it grow, interested to find that the sound of her step and of her voice could give her so much pleasure. He had believed that the power to love; the power to be excited; the power to feel very warmly about anything on earth had gone out from him. He rejoiced in the thought that it had come back. It seemed to lift the chill that was deadening his life.

"I can care still," he told himself. "Tempest—I am sure I care for Tempest. And now this little girl."

The thought delighted him. It seemed to put colour into existence once more. He was in love with love. He felt like a man who walks again after a long illness. And then gradually the amusement and the pleasure faded off the sensation, leaving him face to face with the naked fact. This love was not any longer a thing to be played with and petted. It was flaming into a strength that he had not believed was left in him. And it flamed the fiercer because he saw how little she guessed at it, and saw, too, where she stood just now, unguarded, undefended, with her love for Ducane crumbling round her.

Jennifer was laughing over the fire when he came back.

"I couldn't help being such a baby," she said. "I really did feel as if I'd got to the end of all things."

"Doesn't it feel like a horrible slump back to earth now?"

"It hardly seemed like earth when you picked me up and ran with me."

Dick turned quickly. But her eyes were frank as Slicker's own.

"We are going to be late for dinner," she said. "And I'm hungry already. You haven't got anything edible about you, have you?"

"Only tobacco, I'm sorry to say. But the worst of it is over. Did you wring your skirts out? Let me do it."

He did it with a serene self-possession which made her laugh again.

"How many varied chores do you police have to do through your time of service?" she asked.

"Why—I think it is as well they are not tabulated for us

beforehand. It would take a brave man to face them in the bulk. It is a queer life, and we get inside some funny family histories. Are you warm now?" He took her hand. "I feel that this is partly my fault, you know," he said.

"Oh, no;" she smiled at him. "But it was so good of you to come."

She looked such a little thing with the wet crisping on her bright hair above the collar of his slicker and the glow of the cold on her cheeks. The touch and the look of her moved him powerfully. Then he stooped to the fire again. For the moment he could not trust himself to speak.

But Jennifer chattered gaily. The adventurous spirit in her delighted in even such a small thing as this, and she talked until presently her tongue strayed on Ducane's name.

"I hope he won't be anxious. He was with Robison, and he didn't see me go."

"Are you sure?" Dick looked round suddenly.

"Why, certainly. I called in to him through the dining-room window, but he didn't hear. He was looking over one of your sketches, I think. An animal—it *looked* like a buffalo. And Robison was scowling so."

Dick's face was accustomed to hide what his brain felt.

"That sounds to be rather a left-handed compliment," he said. "People are usually good enough to say they don't have to guess twice at my efforts."

"Well, if you ask them they couldn't do less."

"You could, I think," said Dick, smiling.

"*That* is left-handed—straight from the shoulder. It did really look like a buffalo, but if you'll tell me you meant it for a pig I'll agree to that, too. I can't discourage you when you've been so nice to me."

"You discourage me every time I see you."

"I do? How?"

Before those clear, astonished eyes his own fell.

"Because I can never make out the real colours in your hair and eyes, and I'm supposed to be more or less of an artist," he said.

Jennifer laughed, and over the fire the talk slid down more intimate channels than it had touched yet. It had set them on a new but undefined basis when the storm was passed and Dick took her home under a sullen sky, leaving her on the threshold with an excuse when she would have made him come in. He preferred to take the long walk straight back to the barracks, for the last few hours had shaken him out of his usual cynical indifference more than he had believed possible. The poise of Jennifer's head; her quick movements; her merry laugh and ways, and that alluring allusive tragedy in her eyes had fired the very depths of him. He would not

think of her now. He would not think of what it was going to mean when she knew what he was doing for Ducane; when she knew what he was making her do. Resolutely he turned his mind from her on to Ogilvie and Robison. For that sketch was without doubt the missing sketch of Robison, and therefore, equally without doubt, one or both of those two men had seen Ogilvie after he was supposed to have disappeared from mortal knowledge. The eager light came back to his eyes, and he walked fast, with that hound-mind of his snuffing swiftly along this new bend in the trail.

Ducane met Jennifer in the passage. He had missed her, and had gone to the whiskey-bottle for comfort, as he had done too often of late. He caught her arm, speaking high and thickly.

"Where have you been? Where have you been, Jenny? I wanted you. Was that Heriot with you? Jenny, he's going to get me cornered, that fellow. He's going to get me if you can't switch him off. He's going——"

"Hush!" She drew him into the sitting-room and shut the door. "What is it? Why are you afraid of Mr. Heriot?"

Ducane dropped his red face in his hands and whimpered.

"I can't tell you," he said. "I can't, Jenny, girl. There are too many in it besides me. And I promised. I—I don't know what to do. We might fool Tempest. He knows something, likely. But the other fellow's the devil. You could never bounce him and you could never square him. A man hasn't the ghost of a chance with him. But a woman could handle him. I've heard what he's like. You could keep him off me——"

"Stop!" said Jennifer. She struck her shut hands down by her sides, and her teeth snapped together. "Oh, you coward!" she cried. "You coward! You coward!"

Rage and fear whipped Ducane up on his feet.

"Don't you take that tone with me," he blustered. "I'm doing my share, and why shouldn't you do yours? Damn it, is it all to fall on me? If I can manage to stand it out a couple more months we'll skip, and then they can take Robison if they like."

"Oh! Robison is what they call a fence for you, is he?"

"Don't I tell you there are more than me—Jenny, don't look at me that way, my girl. I love you. I—I can't get along without you, Jenny. By——, I love you too much for that. Don't be mad with me, little girl."

He came to her unsteadily with his hands out. Jennifer stood very still. In some strange way Ducane's misery seemed to pass her by, leaving her cold. She found herself wondering how Dick would behave if any man tried to corner him. Or—what was it Harry had said? He couldn't be bounced or

squared, but a woman could handle him. Was that true? She laid her hand on Ducane's arm.

"Sit down and tell me all you can about it, Harry," she said gently.

To Tempest, driving Florestine back to the barracks, came a sudden glimpse of that tragedy which is often wound up with the simplest of lives. In the woods where the mist drove now on the snowy wind, his pony shied from a trapper who had dragged his hand-sled off the trail, standing to watch them pass. At Tempest's side Florestine gave a little cry and pulled her shawl over her face. Then the pony sprang past, snorting and fighting the bit, and Tempest looked down at the girl.

"Who was it?" he asked. "Not your husband, Florestine?"

"Tommy Joseph," breathed Florestine through the shawl. But, the name being unfamiliar to Tempest, he thought no more of it until Kennedy ushered Tommy Joseph into the office where he made up his reports a half hour later.

Tempest pushed aside his papers and looked up, remembering the man vaguely as one of the many sturdy trappers who came in each spring for the Hudson Bay tracking.

"You wanted to see me?" he asked.

Tommy Joseph nodded. He had spent three days at Grey Wolf at the New Year. Then he had gone again for the spring hunt, and now he had come back, hauling his loaded sled of furs a hundred miles and over for the prospect of regular meals and regular work when he and the men of last season would sail the big scows north behind the outgoing ice to bring again the furs of fall. He was thin with starvation and hard work in the woods, and all the cheer was out of his gaunt, dark face. His clothes were ragged utterly, and he gripped his fur cap in both hands as he spoke with a struggle to find his English.

"You say to me where est l'homme de Florestine?" he began, and Tempest saw the muscles working in his strong throat.

"I do not know," said Tempest. "He went trapping last fall. She has not heard of him since."

"Urrrh!" said Tommy Joseph. Then he shifted on the tired feet that had carried him thirty miles that day. "Him bad," he said. "S'pose vous know dat? Florestine no laike heem. I want her come wit me to de trapping by'm bye après de Nouvelle Year. She mak' cry; mais she no come."

He looked straight at Tempest with the bright keen eyes of his kind.

"She goot girl," he said.

And Tempest, not forgetting that which had been in the shack, said, "I believe you."

Tommy Joseph twisted his cap rapidly, as though trying to engender some new force to aid him.

"S'pose vous let go?" he burst out at last. "She goot girl."

Tempest leant over the desk.

"You know better than to ask that, don't you?" he said, compassionately.

Tommy Joseph twirled his cap again.

"Mebbe si moi was in dat shack moi mak' keel dat bébé," he suggested.

"Maybe," agreed Tempest. "But you were not. She will have to go down to Fort Saskatchewan, Tommy. But I am glad you told me this. I will certainly put it in the report."

"I mak' weesh to been in dat shack, moi," said Tommy Joseph. Then, underbreath, "Mak' take, no can let go. Fonny, dat." He backed to the door with head bent. "Merci much," he said, and went out in silence.

Tempest drew out the report carefully. But this naked little tragedy could not hold him for long. Because he had been a lonely reserved man for so many years the thought and sense of Andree filled his world up now, and her withdrawals and desperate shynesses fitted the delicacy of his dream too well. He never saw her as other men saw her, and he never spoke with her as other men spoke, so that Dick, busy with his own troubles, knew nothing of this thing until Slicker pulled the scales from his eyes one day at the English Mission School.

In the bale-room the deaconess was selling to a succession of Reserve Indians the mixed contents of the bales which came up yearly from the Eastward side, and Slicker was driving her to the verge of hysterics under the loudly-expressed belief that he was "helping." Dick laughed, and knelt on one knee to tie a slant-eyed solid girl into a white silk baby bonnet.

"Now, now," he said; "when we're doing the parents yeoman service, too! This girl has never had her points properly shown up before. How much for the bonnet, Meyo? One dollar? Don't you think it? Two, Meyo, when you hav' such a very attractive piece of live goods to hang it on."

The faded, black-shawled mother and the brawny husband grinned doubtfully, and Miss Chubb snatched the bonnet away.

"You've a right to be ashamed of yourself, Corporal," she cried. "Why, I was just beginning to take an interest in that girl," complained Dick. "Sell her that blue kimono thing, too, and she'll get a husband to-morrow. You've spoiled a promising career, Miss Chubb. Hallo, kiddy!"

Slicker presented a two-year-old buttoned into trousers that swept the floor.

"I imagine that'll about do the trick," he said. "Keep him

warm right alone till he's grown-up, eh ? Hello, sonny. Don't walk all over yourself."

" Sakes," gasped Miss Chubb. " Oh, this is fierce. Slicker, it's a girl."

She collapsed weakly on a bale of quilts and laughed, mopping her eyes. " What in the nation am I to do with you two ? " she said.

" Take us into partnership," suggested Dick unabashed. " We'd get through more trade in a day than you would in three weeks. Hustle around that fellow over there, Slicker. He's tried on every mortal garment we have, and his pockets are bulging with bills yet."

Miss Chubb looked round the bale-room where the rows of shelves dripped the unfolded ends of every kind of garment. For over two hours brown fingers had pulled and brown critical eyes stared at them and brown flat noses smelt them. She was needed in the school-yard where the children were quarrelling shrilly ; she was needed in the kitchen where her young helper struggled to make up a meal for ten hungry mouths on limited resources ; she was needed in the sewing-room where piles of kneeless knickerbockers and toeless stockings gaped for her. And she was needed here so long as the swarthy breeds and silent Indians chose to circle those walls and buy the worth of a dollar.

" Oh, it's fierce," she said again. " And here are some more coming."

Slicker looked from the window. Then he hugged himself.

" Tell me all the things you want to get rid of," he said. " Quick ! I'll make Mrs. Taemana buy them. She can't ever say no."

" Happy Taemana," murmured Dick. " Was it a kiss you asked for, Slicker ? "

" No. This was at the Hudson Bay Indian kick-up at New Year. I stoked her for an hour and she never let up to take breath. I—I—well, frankly, I did think she'd burst. ' Aha,' she said to everything I brought. ' Aha.' "

" Sorry I can't assure you that your persuasive manner was to blame," said Dick lazily. " My dear Slicker, don't you know that it is vulgar for an Indian to refuse food ? Mrs. Taemana, being a specimen of high-bred society, couldn't refuse if she died for it. By the bye, I did hear that de Choiseaux was called in afterwards. Not that that has any connection, of course."

" She's a dear old soul," said Miss Chubb. " I'm very fond of her, Mr. Heriot."

" It is constant balm to a man to find how fond women are of their sex," said Dick. " Now, practically the only bond between men is the struggle for existence. We grant a man

the right to live—off us, if he's clever enough; but we don't take much personal interest in the matter. It is the ladies who provide the encouragement—and the need for it."

Miss Chubb did not care to look at his eyes. She had never cared to look at them since she caught them watching her one day when Tempest passed.

"I'll give you plenty of encouragement to remove Slicker right now," she said. "He keeps me too busy to do anything."

Dick departed with his fingers down Slicker's collar; but outside the yard where the school-children played at the swings, noisy with the fret of spring that would soon call them to the woods again, Slicker freed himself.

"I have been wanting to catch you alone for a week, Dick," he said. "Of course you know what people are saying about Tempest and Grange's Andree?"

Dick shrugged his shoulders. The idle talk had galled him extremely; but he had never considered it his mission to interfere in the affairs of other men.

"Your perspicacity does you credit," he said dryly.

Slicker flushed. His eyes had not lost the look of youth's dreams; but he was growing more conscious of his manhood every day.

"You must stop it," he cried. "I hate to have anything said against Tempest."

"Do you? Well, so do I, Slicker. But don't you understand that no silly talk can touch him? He fathers and mothers the whole of Grey Wolf, and if Andree gets more than her share—well, she is uncommonly pretty, you know. As men of the world, Slicker, we must allow Tempest a few human failings. His virtues insist that they shall be very few, poor devil."

"But he loves her."

"That remark," said Dick, lighting his pipe, "is unworthy of your intellect."

"But it's true! I saw him kissing her hands only yesterday."

"You *what?*"

Slicker repeated his assertion, and Dick dropped the match and put his foot on it. He would have put it on Andree with as little compunction just then. Tempest and Jennifer were the only beautiful things in his world, and the mere suggestion of this sickened him. He looked at the boy narrowly.

"Of course he was only taking out a sliver," he said. "But even so it is hardly worth talking about, is it? And the kind of scandal Grey Wolf amuses itself with is hardly worth dabbling in, either."

He went on, leaving Slicker abashed and unconvinced, and

totally unaware of the shock which he had given the elder man. And it was a severe shock. Dick, walking fast through the forest-trail, acknowledged it. His punishment for the many wrong-doings of his life was the punishment of the young god Frey who sat in Odin's seat and saw too far and too clear for his comfort. Dick had elected to sit in Odin's seat of wisdom, and he saw to the heart of this thing, swift and sure. Looking on Tempest as plain man it was quite likely true, for all things are possible to a plain man. Looking on him as Dick had learned to look the thing was unthinkable—a blasphemy. With a queer quirk of the mind he remembered Miss Chubb's favourite expletive.

"It's fierce," he heard her saying. Then he laughed.

"By all means let us believe in the gods until we see their graves," he said.

Through the white silence about him came the clang of the wild geese flying north, ever north to those long rivers he knew so well. Their "honk-honk" dropped down from sheer overhead as they passed; a wedge driven fast and far through the crystal air, with eager necks and high-beating hearts. Down in the trail the man who had learnt too much felt his heart leap up to them with longing. They took their straight-way; unknowing; unafraid. No wrong-doing bore their white wings down; no shame slacked their impulses. They forswore no good and learnt the grief thereof. They passed by no God and learnt the fear. These things were reserved for mankind; for Dick; for Tempest; for Jennifer. Because to them had been given the inestimable privilege of a soul.

Down in the narrow trail among the dark pines Dick smothered a sigh that was half a curse, and went on with the softening snow slipping under his feet.

On the outskirts of Grey Wolf he met a freighter suffering from over-indulgence in toilet vinegar and vanilla-essence.

"It gives a chap the good feel," he explained, as Dick helped him into the barracks and applied drastic remedies. "A man must drink something."

"My friend," said Dick. "There you speak a great truth. But usually the last thing that man drinks is repentance. Now, I should advise you to get into the abstinence business right away or you'll be all tied up again before you know it. Good-night to you."

And then he went down to Grange's bar and stayed there long. For the knowledge of the young god Frey was heavy on him.

His lagging feet halted him at the mess-room door before he went upstairs that night. Tempest was there; smoking, and dreaming over a ragged little book of Norse verse. Dick watched him through the door, and his heart lightened.

Tempest was sure; sure as the moon and the stars, and as high above earth.

He looked up at Dick's tread, waving his pipe.

"Come on, come on," he said. "I've got an idea here."

It was the impetuous manner of the days when they had loved without doubt or pain. The other man felt the call of it to his heart again, and his eyes were sombre as he dropped into a chair and stretched his legs. Life had broken him, but he felt a shudder of deadly fear at the thought that it might break Tempest.

"You remember your Edda geography, Dick?" Tempest was glowing with his idea. "Niflheim, the land of snow eternal in the north, and Muspelheim, the land of quenchless fire in the south——"

"And Ginungagap, the bottomless abyss separating them," yawned Dick.

"Yes. But don't you see why? That's the germ of it, and it never struck me before. It was there so they couldn't meet in an earthly way. You remember how those two great forces did meet? In mid-air, with all of coarseness sloughed off them. The cold clear spray of Niflheim and the transparent pure heat of Muspelheim. Refined and purified they met in mid-air and made life. And that life made the world and was the world. Understand? There's no way to the higher life along the earthly plane—that chucks us into the abyss. But the soul-essence—the thing distilled away from the heat of the blood and the barren ice of selfishness—My God! *That* is the thing! *That* is life!"

He walked the room now with his light nervous steps. His head was flung back and his eyes shone. Dick thought suddenly of a Browning-sick girl who used to call Tempest "Suntreader," and the smile on his lips had lost its cynicism, although his words had not.

"Very pretty," he said. "Unfortunately the bulk of us go into Ginungagap. Partly for the sake of company, and partly because we are still gross enough to prefer the heat of the blood unrefined. And partly because the habit of wanting to get to the bottom of things seems more ineradicable than the habit of wanting to get to the top."

"It is not. That's just where we mistake. When we can lose that idea we will be——"

"Gods," suggested Dick suavely.

"No, you irreligious owl. But we will be able to see Life and Love as——"

"Not human love. You couldn't put that into such a universe, old man."

Tempest stopped to laugh. There were many days when he felt the great barrier between himself and this man. Bu

there were a few when he felt the ancient bond. He felt it to-night, with the flush of his excitement on him, and he talked eagerly for an hour, urged on by Dick's idly-dropped comments. He went away at last, glad-eyed and buoyant still. But Dick sat on with his pipe burnt out and stared at the opposite wall.

He did not usually care to analyse emotions in himself. But he knew that he was shaken just now. This man, three years older than himself, was a century younger in heart. He had kept his ideals, and those ideals were going to slay him now—unless someone interfered. All unguessing Tempest had shown his heart to the man who knew too much. One of earth's chosen men was failing in his trust for very sake of those grossnesses which he repudiated. One of those men to whom knighthood was more than a name was carrying into the lists a favour for which he must not fight. Dick had not studied men and women all his life without having seen by now where Tempest's real call lay. Tempest belonged to Canada. He loved it with that ardent love which some few men can give their land. He was one of those born to serve her need. He was fit to serve in those places where the server's work is so infinitely higher than the master's. He was fit to give heart-blood and body-sweat to her making. He was fit to travail and suffer that order might be wrought from chaos, plenty from poverty. He was fit to be made himself into one of those mighty men whose name will ring along the land long after their feet cease to echo on it.

Dick bit softly on his pipe-stem, and there was a curious half-cruel, half-tender look in his eyes. Tempest could be saved for all this—if anyone took the trouble to save him. He could be set to bear his banner and his high heart through to a lonely Calvary. He could be set to do the things that other men shirked—by anyone who had wit enough to nail him flat on the cross of other men's sins and shortcomings. It was just that Tempest should hang there, because he was worthy, and the great punishments of earth have always fallen upon her noblest. For the little people of little soul do their eating and their sleeping and their dying, and let the world go by.

There was humour in this to Dick, and temptation. He had the skill to block Tempest if he chose. He had the skill to make Tempest the thing which he himself could not be. He laughed softly, with the cruelty deepening in his eyes. Then suddenly, with a sigh that was half a sob, he dropped his face in his hands, and so sat silent for very long.

CHAPTER VII.

"THE RETURN OF OGILVIE."

"SUCH things should not be allowed," said Slicker hotly.

"Unfortunately," said Dick, and his voice was proportionately cool, "we have learnt to conduct society on the assumption that each human being is a separate individual. And therefore, logic requires that we allow to each at least the outward rights of personal independence."

"But they have no right to use those rights against another."

"You *know* Mrs. Hotchkiss says that bruise was where she fell against a tree, Slicker," reproved young Forbes.

"But *she* knows it isn't. And so do we."

Along Leigh's warm, shady verandah the older men glanced at each other in amusement. Dick looked down on the two boys spread luxuriously on the sunny grass.

"Whose rights are you encroaching on now, Slicker?" he asked.

"Oh, it's all rot!" Slicker sat up with a jerk. "Love and marriage just upset the preconceived plan of the whole cosmos."

"Especially marriage," murmured Dick; while the other men laughed, stinging Slicker into defence.

"We ought to have been all men or all women," he cried. "All men wouldn't bother to bully each other, and all women wouldn't bother to nag each other. There wouldn't be much love, and so there wouldn't be much sorrow. We'd just jig along each on our own."

"Sounds enticing," said Bond, the young factor of Revillons. "But there seem to be some fundamental objections to that plan, Slicker. The world has to go on, you know. Or, at least, we are under that impression. We may be overestimating our value."

"Heaven help us if we are," said Dick. He looked at Slicker. "Who gave you leave to take Kant and Hegel and some other books out of my room?" he asked.

Slicker went scarlet. Several conditions in Grey Wolf had upset him lately; and he was seeking explanation for them, and, incidentally, for his own existence and that of everyone else.

"I found them," he muttered.

"I have just said so." Dick's smile was malicious. "Well, you've found your punishment pretty quick, too."

"But can't you do something with Hotchkiss?" said Bond. "I'm afraid he gives that poor little woman a bad time."

"Not unless she complains—or Leigh. Speak to Leigh. He's Hotchkiss' boss."

Dick yawned, and retired from the following discussion, lying back in his chair with his half-shut eyes on Slicker. And presently the boy rose, with a swing of defiance; walked down to the gate, and turned along the road.

Dick was half-smiling, for he understood the reason for this explosion so clearly. In these weeks Slicker had been watching the breaking-up of a home across the Lake. Where he could he battled for Jennifer against Ducane's growing drunkenness and demands; where he could not he went away, and, quite naturally, cursed the universe. Dick saw no reason to curse the universe. He had become to Jennifer that always-kindly, always-tactful friend whose vigorous interest and vitality cheered and strengthened her as nothing else could do. And she had become to him much more than he yet allowed himself to believe, although his nature was daily warning him. Jennifer, brave-eyed and unshaken in her wifehood, meant more to him than any woman had meant before, even as Tempest meant more than any other man had meant.

But he knew that he would probably let Tempest go to ruin without a finger lifted to save him, and he foresaw that he would more than probably pluck Jennifer out of her blind innocence into a knowledge which could not fail to hurt her. The man who desired a thing and yet dared not take it aroused Dick's amused contempt and curiosity all his days. For he looked at the race through the individual, unguessing that the glory of mankind is to look at the individual through the race.

Presently Leigh's words drew him into the talk again.

"Dick, did you see that old fellow who came up with one of those bogus prospectuses last week? A baby-faced old buffer with a downy beard and not enough snap to curse with when he found he'd been done."

"Yes, I saw him. Ducane sent him on to me."

"Well? What are you going to do about it?" demanded Leigh.

"What do you expect us to do? Grey Wolf is not the first place to be boomed in this way, and it won't be the last. I once bought shares in a gold-mine that was three miles out at sea myself. Such things must happen, you know. We invite it when we will buy on paper."

"You call it a boom," said Bond. "It will kill the place."

"Not it. A German came up lately with scrip that showed

a fine river-frontage—but unfortunately he found that he had to go into the river to get it. But he liked the land, and he bought that genuine frontage of Robison's near Pitcher Portage." He smiled gently. "Robison is advertising us quite a little bit, I think," he added.

He said it again to himself as he rode over to Ducane's for supper a little later. But this time he added Ducane's name, and under the wide dark tent of trees where sweet scents moved the birds answered him in cheerful, rollicking song. By the trail the yellow catkins of the pussy-willow were swaying, and Dick came with their pollen on him to the dining-room, where Ducane was working at a roll-top desk. Ducane swept the papers into a drawer and locked it instantly, and Dick followed the disappearance of the bunch of keys into his pocket with the eyes of desire. The handling of that bunch for such a little while might mean so much.

Throughout the meal Ducane was moody and irritable. He smoked a cigar between his mouthfuls, scattering the ash on the tablecloth. Jennifer's eyes caught Dick's, and she smiled bravely.

"Isn't he dreadful?" she said. "It is always a cigar or cigarettes. The kitten eats what she can, and my chipmunk thinks them invaluable for his next winter's store. But I still find the ends about everywhere."

"You always exaggerate so infernally," growled Ducane.

"If you came out of that cloud of smoke you'd call it by another name," said Dick. "Where is the chipmunk, Mrs. Ducane? I haven't seen him since he bit my finger, and I've been afraid to ask for fear he'd died of it. Do you remember Cowper's 'Mad Dog'? There the man recovered from the bite. But it killed the dog."

He continued to talk; lightly, casually, though he missed little of what Ducane did or said. This smoking at meal-times proved that Ducane's nerves were rapidly getting beyond self-control. And the furtive look in his eyes proved the same. The man was on the verge of a big coup or an utter breakdown. Either was equally likely to affect him in this way. But whichever it was Dick hoped that the matter would not be taken out of his own hands. The instinct of the chase was too strong in him. He knew that he could not let go now. Then he looked at Jennifer in the lamplight with all the daintiness of the carefully-arranged table about her, and the cynicism in his blood brought the faint smile to his eyes. Life did this kind of thing to him always. It never gave him the sweet without the bitter. But Jennifer was a woman only; neither stronger nor wiser than other women. And she was an unhappy one also.

In the sitting-room later Ducane was smoking cigarettes.

He smoked them rapidly, flinging them into the fire half-burnt out. And he walked through the room in restless irritation, tossing a word into the conversation now and again, and contradicting Dick rudely. Dick was well accustomed to this. Jennifer never asked anyone else to her home now, but she had ceased to mind Dick. Indeed, without understanding why, she found comfort in his presence.

In a tall, grey jar on the floor big branches of pussy-willow showed palely, scenting the room with spring. Ducane brushed once against them as he walked, and he turned, with a curse, kicking the jar over.

"That'll teach you to put your deuced rubbish about all over the shop," he said savagely. "Pick it up and take it away."

Jennifer stood up, flushing. This was worse than anything he had hitherto shown before Dick. She silenced Dick with a movement of her hand as he rose, and went forward. But Ducane had already entangled his feet in the branches. He stooped; wrenched them away from his ankles, and flung them in Jennifer's face.

"Do you want to make me fall and break my neck?" he stormed.

"Harry, dear——"

And then a quiet hand put Jennifer aside.

"Please go away for a few minutes, Mrs. Ducane," said Dick.

"Oh—you won't——?"

"I won't hurt him. But he might hurt you. Please go."

He held the door open, and Ducane lurched forward, inarticulate with fury. He had ceased to fear Dick for the moment. And he was a big man. Bigger and heavier than Dick. Jennifer stood on the threshold. She was half-dazed, but one little sharp thread of fear ran through her.

"Oh—I can't. He's not safe——"

"Not safe for me?" Dick smiled. "Don't be frightened," he said, and shut the door, facing Ducane with his back to it.

Jennifer stood outside it with her face white and set. She was glad, fiercely glad that a man should meet Ducane on the ground where she had bowed in submission so long. And she was burning with shame that it should be necessary. And she was thrilling with some unexplainable emotion which was more than anger, more than relief, more than pain. She could not analyse it; but she knew that from no other man would she have allowed this interference between herself and her husband.

Ducane's voice rose, loud and hectoring. She could not hear Dick. She did not want to hear him. She went down the passage to her own room and stood looking out on the calm night of stars. There was no love for Ducane left in her

now, and at present she felt that there was no love for anyone or anything else in all the world.

Ducane was scattering curses through his incoherent wrath. His natural bullying temper had outleapt its bounds and he was nearly mad with fury. But the quiet, half-smiling man against the door cowed him. He kept his distance.

"How dare you interfere between me and my wife?" he foamed. "In a man's own house, too. I'll have you——"

"Do you really call yourself a man?" asked Dick politely.

"I—I——" Ducane became incoherent again. "You have no right, legal or otherwise, damn you——"

"I don't want any right other than that of my muscles." Dick came forward suddenly; close up to the stuttering, purple face. "Your word isn't worth much," he said. "But I have a fancy to make you give it to me. Will you control yourself more in future? You had better say yes. I give you a couple of minutes to think it over."

"I'll have you up for assault if you try to bully me."

"If you do I assure you I will endeavour to make it worth your while." Dick began to unbutton his tunic. "You prefer it this way then?" he asked.

"No! No!" Ducane backed away, unmanned by a sudden fear. "No. I know you could lick me."

"So do I. If I wasn't so absolutely sure perhaps I'd take a sporting try at it. Mr. Ducane, nerve-attacks like this don't come on a man without reason. Unless you want me to begin taking a professional interest in your affairs you had better learn to control yourself. Do you understand?"

He doubted the wisdom of this half-veiled threat. But he needed a weapon which would strike home. This did. Ducane reeled back against the wall, and his puffy face turned tallow-pale.

"There's nothing wrong with my private affairs," he gasped. "Nothing."

"Then it is heart or stomach, I suppose. You'd better see de Choiseaux. Shall I send him over in the morning?"

Ducane acquiesced sullenly. But it seemed to Dick that he snatched at this way of escape. Dick bade him good-night blandly.

"I'll come over with de Choiseaux," he said. "And I'll ask Mrs. Ducane to tell me how you've spent the night. You mustn't let those nerves get any more hold, you know."

He left Ducane groping with the hint behind this, and went down the passage to get his hat. In the open doorway Jennifer came to him, and under the pale starlight she looked very small and frail.

"Thank you," she said, almost inaudibly. "But I hope that it will never be necessary for you to do this any more."

He had to lighten that note of tragedy in her voice before he could think of anything else.

"Why, it was nothing," he said. "When a man gets a bad attack of nerves a few plain words from another man soon help to make him see things straight. I am going to bring de Choiseaux over in the morning. Ducane has consented to take a tonic. You'll see that he'll soon be all right again. But he'll have to knock off his smoking."

Both knew well that it was very much more than nothing. But she said only:

"How very kind you always are to me."

Dick looked down at her smiling. He was wondering if she would say this to him in the days that were coming.

"That virtue brings its own reward in this case," he said, and rode away into the night.

A week later Slicker tottered in at the barrack-gate, white-faced.

"Dick, I've found him," he gasped. "I've found Ogilvie."

Dick led him into the little office and shut the door.

"Where?" he said. "Take your time—and take this first."

Slicker swallowed the small nip from Dick's flask, and shuddered. "He's at the bottom of that coulée a couple of hundred yards from the Mission trail. I didn't go down, but I knew that coon coat of his. And the flies were buzzing. Ugh!"

"All right. Don't you worry about Ogilvie. He's been shut of his troubles these six months, lucky devil. Hold on till I get Kennedy and the buckboard. You must show us the place right now."

But among the close-set young poplars and the sweet-scented Balm of Gilead at the coulée-top Slicker backed away.

"I—I guess I'll stay with the team," he said, and the two policemen crashed down through the undergrowth together, with the drumming of woodpeckers in the hollow trees about them sounding like hammering on an empty coffin.

Sunk deep in the coulée-bottom was a huddle of rough fur; something that gleamed, as though scratched out by a questing coyote, and a boot turned upwards, with a white butterfly poised on its tip. In the hot air the buzzing of flies came up drowsily, suggesting sleep. But Ogilvie's sleep was six months long.

Dick stooped over the thing on the ground. For a little time he did not move. Then, with a strong jerk of his wrist, he pulled a knife from the joint of the neck and collar-bone and stood up, quenching Kennedy's exclamations.

"We have found Ogilvie's bones," he said. "That's all you know. Now help shift him out of this."

Four drove home where three drove out, and in the loose-box at the barrack-stable Ogilvie was laid, wrapped decently in a Hudson Bay blanket. Then Dick went up to his bedroom and washed and brushed himself, whistling softly the while. The hound-instinct was awake in him, whipping him on to the blood-trail, and already he had scented the two whom he must follow. If it were not Robison who had done this thing then it assuredly was Grange's Andree, and it behoved him to have those two suspects in his hands before the news of Ogilvie's return got loose in Grey Wolf. He had enforced present silence from Kennedy and Slicker. But he would not be able to keep it for long. He laughed, brushing the thick hair back from his sunburnt forehead, and settling his cap with a swagger.

"It's you and me for it first, I reckon, Grange's Andree," he said, and clattered cheerfully down the narrow stairs.

He felt relieved that Tempest would not be back from the Black Mile until the next night. The matter was entirely under his control, and he knew exactly what he was going to do as he walked down to Grange's where a Sabbath calm lay over everything, including the many dogs that slept in the dust round the door.

"I want to speak to Andree a moment," he said, leaning in through the back-parlour window; and Moosta, with unsteady babies reeling round her ample skirts, answered him.

"Suppose she go in canoe. She mak' fight avec Monsieur Lampard."

"Thank you," said Dick, and withdrew his head, and went down to the river.

"She can flirt with that little beast when she has Tempest!" he said. Then he shrugged his shoulders. "I know something about women," he said. "But I doubt Andree is rather too raw even for me."

Against the bank where the canoe widened to the lake he found Andree in her canoe. She held the overhanging willow-branches with one round arm from which the sleeve had fallen back. There was a bracelet of the dyed porcupine quills on it, and a belt of like make clipped her supple waist. She lay back idly, and her long slender feet were thrust out before her, cased in new moccasins gay with blue and magenta bead-work and silk. Dick smiled.

"Waiting for Monsieur Lampard to come back and make friends," he murmured.

Then he slid down the back and stood beside her. Andree looked up with a pretty pretence at anger. Then she frowned. She had no reason to love Dick.

"What boy are you waiting for this evening, Andree?" asked Dick pleasantly, and stepped into the canoe.

"Not you," she said sharply, and drew her feet in.

" Ah, I'm sorry for that." Dick reached for the paddle and sent the canoe out into the stream. " Because, you see, I've come. I want to speak to you rather particularly, Grange's Andree."

She looked up with suspicion at his suave voice. Dick nodded. His smile was almost bland.

" Why did you tell me that you didn't see Ogilvie that night in the Mission trail ? " he asked softly.

" Ah ! " she said, and half-sprang up. But Dick was too quick for her. He dropped the paddle, and thrust her back in the seat.

" You can't swim," he said. " And I'm not going to hurt you. Now, what time did you see Robison on that same night ? "

" I did never see either," she said with a gasp.

" Did you see them both at the same time ? "

" I did not see——"

" Were they both in the trail together when you saw them ? "

" Nom de Dieu ! " she burst out. " You devil ! "

" Keep quiet. You near had us over. Both at once, was it ? "

" I did never——"

" It was both at once then ? "

This steady hammering was too much for her.

" Aha," she said, and Dick told her fear by her quickened breathing.

" Now," he said persuasively, " you will tell me what else you saw, Andree."

" Diable ! " she cried, and her voice rose in a scream. " I not see nothing. I not know. Oh—damn you, Dick."

" That matter has already been attended to, thank you. Now, what did you see ? "

" I did see nothing."

Dick's hand slid round her wrist softly, and suggestively. " I think you know what it means if you keep on saying that," he said.

" Oh ! " Andree shuddered, drawing her head in between her shoulders. Then suddenly she flung it up and looked at him defiantly.

" Est-ce que vous avez envie de moi to tell ? " she demanded.

" You have guessed exactly right, Andree."

" Robison," she began. Then she put her hand out. " Take those eyes out of my eyes," she said. " Now—I will say. They did mak' fight. An Ogilvie he hit. An' an' Robison take le couteau——" she dropped her face in her hands. " Non, non," she gasped. " Tais'-vous. Ah ! Cette affaire ! C'est affreux ! "

Dick sat back, letting her go.

"I think that will do for now," he said. "You can tell the rest in court. Where is Robison?"

"He did go north with Ducane on Mercredi—on Wednesday. I do not know——"

Dick smothered an oath. This was an unforeseen complication. And the man had four days' start.

"Are you sure?" he asked.

"Oui," said Andree sulkily.

On the night before Robison left he had shown his increasing jealousy against Tempest very plainly, and it had taken all her small amount of wit to quieten him. Andree had no more love for Tempest than for Robison. But it pleased her to have the men in the bar chaff her about him, and it pleased her to see the light leap into his eyes when she came near him.

Dick took up the paddle and drove the canoe in under the willows again.

"I am obliged to you for your graciousness, Andree," he said. "But I advise you not to shower it on any one else in this matter, or you may get yourself into trouble. And I wonder if any girl who had not Indian blood in her could have held her tongue for so long."

He went back through the streets, asking for Robison and Ducane, and confirming Andree's words. They had gone to catch the scows making north with the first spring freight for Fort Smith and Hay River and many a lonely outpost beside. Dick knew well the trail they must take. He knew the run of the river from Pelican Portage down, and he knew just as exactly his chances of catching the steamer which met the scows at Fort McMurray. An hour later he ran down to the bank on moccasined feet, and within ten minutes a little canoe shot out into the sunset, with Dick kneeling, eager-eyed and lithe-armed, in the bow, and Tommy Joseph in the stern.

Tommy had tracked up that river and sailed down it until he knew the lie of it by heart, and when night came the steady push of the paddles still ate up the miles. Once a bull-moose thrashed the undergrowth close by with his wide-branching horns, and far off the shy cow answered with a wild note; harsh, and strangely appealing. Silence dropped, and Dick knew that the huge animal was swinging his mighty bulk and heavy antlers through the woods as noiseless and as swift as a weasel.

It was hot on the river through the days that followed. And it was very lonely. Sometimes across an open sweep of red-top grass coyotes raised their high wild howling and shot from sight like yellow shadows. Sometimes loons rose from desolate marshes and flew into horizon with straight beaks wide open and strident cries that made crazy echoes. Sometimes a brown bear rocked along the rim of their night-camp

with his silent shuffle, or the nasal whistle of a night-hawk on the trail of a bat came to them where they lay under the white moon. But the men spoke little, and in silence they thought their own thoughts, still-faced and quiet-eyed, in that reserve which the men of the back-trails know well.

Many times Dick thought of Robison; swarthy, stealthy, ready to die hard when his time came. Of Ducane who would crouch and cry when rounded up for his branding. Of Jennifer—and then his thoughts went no further, and all the great dead of whom the forest told were nothing to him. For the men who loved Canada haunt her silent places still; a ghostly, unforgotten company, grey with the thickening dust of time. Alexander Mackenzie, who broke out the white-man's flag where only the Indian's smoke-flag had blown; Franklin, thrusting his pincer-points down from the naked Pole; Bishop Bompas, that wide-hearted, dauntless "Apostle of the North"; James Robertson; George Munro Grant, and the men of a later day; Strathcona and Mount Stephen, who smote with steel and paved with iron and buckled up coast to coast.

And a thousand untold, and yet another thousand; men who died with shut teeth and fierce eyes on the Long Traverse; trappers whose sleeping places the grey wolf knows; freighters, Indians, Hudson Bay runners, men of the Mounted Police—Canada's lovers all, sowing their bones down the trails they blazed that other men might follow after.

All the world was full of summer, from the duck nesting in unknown pools to the reeling rim of the Arctic day, where the reindeer moss pushes green through the snow, and the bergs break out, and the whalers wake and the great seals put to sea. One early dawn, when the portages of Grand Rapid Island were passed, a sleepy breed in his tepee was waked to hear a burnt-skinned, sunk-eyed man in the uniform which explained more than his words ask how long it was since the scows had passed the Rapids. His answers seemed jerked from him; and then the man sprang into a canoe, and struck out where the Athabaska ran red under the dawning. The breed grunted, rubbing his eyes.

"By gar," he said. "Go roun' wit chip on hees shoulder, dat chap. Carcajou, heem."

Carcajou, the wolverine, was first made of all created things, and he alone has changed neither habit nor form since Kitche Manitou put him into the woods. Therefore Carcajou has knowledge of all hid things behind those watchful eyes of his, and the breed on the bank was not the first man who had called Dick Carcajou in uneasy resentment.

Down this wide northern road uncounted men of many lands have gone to the Yukon gold; to the untapped mineral

wealth of the hills ; to the lip of the Arctic where the kit-fox breeds. Scores had never come back. But their ghostly march did not trouble Dick. Between the great wash of water and the hard naked sky all the past was shrivelled up. He had come with chafed limbs and stiff shoulders to get his man ; and that instinct would not die, though the sunset flung mocking colour on drawn, set faces, and the moon saw two figures that crouched lower with humped shoulders as the weary paddles flashed in and flashed out.

Citrons and tender blues swamped the flats of Fort McMurray under daybreak when a man in earth-stained kharki walked drunkenly up the gangway of a little steamer where the barefoot crew laboured among the hay-bales, boxes and myriad things that collect naturally when a river-steamer comes to anchor. Two hours later the captain, coming aboard, trod on that man where he stretched unlawfully into the passageway. But he showed no surprise when Dick sat up and asked for a passage so far as he chose to go. Bessait listened in silence. Small curiosities do not fit with a thousand-mile landscape, and the talk of the great rivers make the human voice sound thin. Then he made reply in one grave nod and went on deck.

Dick proceeded with his toilet in a lazy content. Haste was over for the time, and at leisure he made his investigations.

The crew were as mixed a draft as Bessait usually carried. French breeds with the strength of ten ; a remittance man gone sufficiently insane to cook salt junk and dried moose and tinned meats and fresh fish month in and month out for a clamorous multitude ; a stoker with an unnecessary certificate, who was engineer and greaser and everything else ; an Englishman with suggestive holes cut in his clothes-corners as though some name had been blotted out ; a few quiet, firm-lipped Canadians, Fraser's young son, and a delicate-limbed, fine-faced boy-student from McGill University, who did what he was told for the sake of learning life in his holidays.

Dick yawned and went aft among the carefully-stacked barrels, boxes, cases, bacon in sacks, harness, bales of clothes, seasoned timber, bags of sealed mail, and many things more which Bessait was taking north addressed to men whom the world " outside " had forgotten long since. On a bale sat a French priest with biretta and breviary. The stamp of an old-world monastery was raw on him, and Dick wondered idly what kind of work this man would make of life among the realities. Then he pushed open the door of the half-moon glass-sided saloon where a handful of men were playing poker at this nine of a summer morning, and looked in.

Brodribb, the Hudson Bay factor from Fort Smith, saw him first, and gave welcome. Ducane twisted in his chair ; went

white, and gripped the table-edge. Robison made the cards in great hairy hands that did not shake, and Dick's heart approved him. For Robison would never lick the hand that lassooed him. He was too surely a son of the strong North for that.

Dick got his pipe out, and cast himself into the smoke-reek and talk. And the doings of these men of the naked lives unrolled in their idle speech. There was Caird of the Government Survey, grey-haired and keen-eyed and calm, going down for his twentieth year's measuring-off of the solitudes with gay young de Musset from Ottawa and the silent Lyons with the tragedy in his still face. There was a broad-barrelled German, prospecting for gold with an absolutely admirable outfit and an easy knowledge that he might forget the ways of white nations before he mixed with them again. There was a Revillons' " fur-pup " going North to a dim, slim branch of that great Company which has dared raise its head against the Hudson Bay, and a big, buoyant lad of the North-West Police called to the long lonely beats of Fort Macpherson. He would be a man when he came back, that fresh-faced boy, and the little " fur-pup " would have ceased to yelp when the cards of Life went against him.

Through the open door Dick heard Bessait shout down the tube to the other controller of the steamer's destinies.

" Kick her into it," he said. And then the shudder of life ran through the dead timber ; the screw backed and squattered ; swung out to the broad full stream, and the " Northern Light " laid her nose to the Pole and went to look for it. Among the cotton-woods a red handkerchief leapt up like a heart-flame, and Dick slid out of the door to make answer with his own. The red flag flew till the banks veered in, and Dick laughed, wondering if the girl in the cotton-woods knew. Then he ran up the steep ladder to the naked upper deck where the funnel roared and all the canvas surface lay at gaze to the open sky. And as his head lifted above the level his eyes met Jennifer's.

He stared, almost unbelieving. Then he reddened with anger. Was Ducane dragging his wife into these shady games which he was playing ? What had he brought her up here for except as a blind ? And if so what was he going to do—with her and with himself ? The thoughts fled through his mind like lightning on a cloud. But they left their mark. Even with those brave, frightened eyes on his face ; even with the realization that it was Jennifer, the woman he loved, the eager hunting instinct leapt up in him as he came forward.

Jennifer had dropped her work with an exclamation of fear. And that nailed his suspicions home to the wall of fact. Ducane was on special business—dangerous business ; and she knew it.

"Oh—what have you come for?" she said.

"I would like to say that it was to see you. But I'm afraid I gave myself away just now." He sat down on the bench beside her. "You don't know how curious it seems to me—to see you here—with your work. Like the real essence of home-life among all us men."

Jennifer flushed, with her fear fading out under his look and his words. He was so familiar, so reliable, such a piece of home at this edge of all things new. It was impossible that he should give reason for fear. She smiled at him.

"I can generally adapt myself to my surroundings somehow," she said.

"You do very much more than that. You can adapt your surroundings to yourself."

"Indeed I can't. You, for instance. I wouldn't let you wear that leather loop round your head at the back. It roughs your hair up."

He took off his Stetson and contemplated the narrow strap.

"I can't wear hat-pins," he complained. "Besides, it's part of the equipment. Do you really think I'm a surrounding that couldn't be adapted?"

She glanced up, half-startled, half-puzzled at his earnest tone.

"Give me my work-bag, please," she said, evading the issue, and she took the little silken thing from his hands and sought for her scissors. "Where do you people of the outside edges get your chivalry from? I have never been so waited on in all my life. Antoine carried my grip into every cabin there is, and Louis Peaceful followed with the captain's sweet-grass mattress. Mrs. Carter and I could have had every blanket in the scows if we'd wanted them, and some one has been drawing us pails of water to wash with ever since we came aboard."

"Who is Mrs. Carter?" asked Dick idly. But he was watching her face.

"Wife of the missionary at Fort Resolution," Jennifer turned on him. "She sent her daughter out to school ten years ago, and now she has been to Moosejaw to see her married. It was the first time she had been out in eighteen years, and she is going back to perhaps eighteen more. It is not only you men who serve this great North-West of ours."

"And it is not only you women who know it."

"I know that it is better to work without being satisfied than to be satisfied without having worked. But—oh dear!—she is so good that she makes me feel horribly bad."

"Take me as a palliative, then. On that basis I ought to make you feel horribly good. And—do you think that I will possibly be able to exist in proximity with Mrs. Carter?"

Jennifer laughed. But she shivered. A sudden wind

from the wing of the future had touched her, and the woman in her feared the unknown even as the girl in her reached out for it.

They talked in the new knowledge that had come to Jennifer through these days when she had watched the red sun sink and the long dusks darken the river, and had learnt the slang and the run of the river-work and dipped deep in the lives of the many men and the one woman about her. And then that flat-chested, grey-haired woman with the brave bright eyes interrupted them, and Dick went away to smoke and to think.

He had no intention to arrest Robison so long as more might be learned by leaving him free. What was to be learned he did not know yet. But he meant to watch; and Ducane knew it, and said so to Jennifer that night, taking her up to the very nose of the steamer, among the windlasses and the warping ropes with the silky water parting a few feet below and day yet hanging in the sunset colours. He hid his face against Jennifer's sleeve as he lay on the poop, turning to her as to an infinite well from which he could draw his courage.

"He's after us," he said. "I know he is. What else should he come for?"

"He says there is that defalcating Italian——"

"He says! Jenny, I'd back out of this if Robison would let me. I can't stand it. I can't stand it. But Robison won't lose money, and I'll lose my own if I can't put this through. But I'm afraid——"

Jennifer bit her lips.

"Then lose your own," she said. "Let us go out poor so long as we go honest. We can begin again."

"Don't be a little fool." Ducane sat up, pushing the damp hair back from his florid, handsome face. His eyes were bloodshot and his lips unsteady. "What the devil you do know about poverty and disgrace?" he said.

"*You* know that I don't let you swear to me, Harry."

Ducane moved impatiently.

"Unless Heriot can be squared there won't be much more from us in a little," he said. "Heriot has a long head and a short suit, and he knows how to play his game. I never knew a M.P. who could be squared yet; but you're pretty thick with him. If you could keep him dangling around you this trip, Jenny——"

Jennifer looked down that great pale gleam of water that led, by link and link, to the Arctic Seas. Ducane was killing her innocent friendship by his coarse thoughts as he had killed so much else.

"And who is to guard Robison? He hasn't a wife," she said.

"Curse Robison." Ducane brought his head close. "I'll get ten years—and likely more—if Heriot catches me," he said.

"And so sure as there is a God you deserve it," said Jennifer.

Ducane sat up as though a cracker had exploded beneath him.

"You—you——" he sputtered. "Do you know that you are my wife?"

Jennifer turned her wide, dark eyes on him. The light was faint and warm in her hazy hair.

"Oh, Harry, will you never be a man?" she said sadly.

Ducane was silent. From the upper deck rolled the sound of singing, where the McGill student and Dick led the interminable chorus to each verse of each song that was sung.

"Come up; come up, come all the way up, come all the way up the river,
Come up; come up, come all the way up . . come all the way up the river."

To Jennifer there was menace in that strong body of virile sound sweeping out to the lonely waters and the still forests and naked cliffs. Was she too called to go all the way up the grey river of dread that broke at last to the Arctic Seas?

Ducane spoke sulkily:

"I guess it's all right for you," he said. "*You* don't go to prison."

Jennifer's spirit was there already.

"Oh," she said. "I can so well understand a man doing wrong. But to do wrong and be afraid all the time—where's the pleasure in *that?*"

Ducane did not chuckle as Dick would have done. His forehead was wet.

"Pleasure," he said. "Pleasure, good Lord!" He caught her hands. "You must save me, Jenny," he said. "I can't stand it, I can't. Remember I've always loved you, little girl——"

Jennifer jerked her hands free and stood up. She could not listen to the desecration of that word which had once meant so much to her. It seemed so long since she first knew that she never had loved Ducane. Those great things which she had thought to honour in him were never there. She was the supporter, not the supported; the mother and nurse, not the wife. She had lost, lost right through in this game of love which she had been playing, and the naked path of duty was hard for a young heart to follow.

Dick looked down and saw her, a slim, tense figure in the

warm, dull light that wrapped her, and for a background the great naked steel breast of the river and the far faint sky. She looked so little and lonely; and the man at her feet was out of the picture, even as the man on the upper deck.

"I—will do what I can," said Jennifer. "It may not be much."

Then she turned from him and climbed the ladder to the upper deck, for she dared not be alone with herself just then.

The air on the upper deck was charged with life and laughter and talk, and a swift impulse of childish longing made Jennifer slide down with her head against Mrs. Carter's knee. Her own mother was very far off in Ontario, with half a continent of earth and more than a continent of knowledge between them; but the hard, rough hand that touched her forehead now and again was a mother's hand also, tender with love for an absent daughter.

The women did not speak. They sat on the surge of the man-talk that swept them this way and that through air that was strong with tobacco-smoke and that curious pride which falls on the Northmen when they speak of their own domain. For the North and the things of the North are the only world to the men bred in it. Brodribb himself had never seen the sea, and he did not want to. He had a thousand miles and a thousand added of good earth to his either hand, and the lakes he knew grew shells and seaweed and beat their wrinkled cliffs with combers from beyond horizon. And if the waters were fresh there were salt-beds and salt-springs for moose and bear and buffalo to find their comfort in.

Disconnectedly the talk ran round. Talk of the added bounty on timber wolves, bringing it to twenty dollars; of the wood-buffalo yet killed by them yearly, and Caird's belief that no bounty would induce the superstitious Indian to court ill-luck by slaying a timber-wolf before he went to the hunting. Talk of the "strong man" of the North who had just won home beyond all records by dragging a freighted scow unaided up the Pelican Rapids; of "Soft-wind-of-the-morning," the Indian girl at Great Slave Lake, who had so queered the finest trapper in her tribe that he sat without her father's lodge day and night, starving until his bones stood out for love of her; and of the increased tracking-wage and the price of silver and cross-fox skins.

Caird told of the prospectors in the tar-soaked sand along the Athabaska, who struck rock-salt in punching an oil-shaft, and later blew their whole plant to high heaven by building a mosquito-smudge over-near. Brodribb spoke of a bear-hunt when he went to break in three young dogs and lost two. But he came home with the pelt and a ripped-up arm where the white steel-hard claw had touched.

"I guess it wasn't exactly bear-baiting," he said. "The bear had a sporting chance. But my old rifle has never played dog on me yet."

Here the men fell on technicalities concerning the one weapon which means life on the trails; and Jennifer leaned her head back and looked in Mrs. Carter's eyes.

"You have had things happen to you, too?" she whispered, and the grey-haired woman smiled.

"Why," she said, "perhaps. Things like cooking supper for thirty children when it is pitch dark at quarter to four and you can't see the crowds of Indian women squatted about you cleaning the day's fish-catch, or the children who steal in to get warm by the stove, or the men who smoke and loaf and will leave the door open. And when you go to the cupboard you get your hand in a mouth or eyes, or you step on something, and don't know if it is a fish or a human or—or *what*. And the smell is indescribable, and you can *feel* the dirt; and the cold and the dark are real things that press on you and make you slow and cross and stupid. But it is worth while, you know. They love us."

"And love is a very, very great thing," said Ducane's young wife gravely.

A few mallard splashed in the reeds alongside; rose black against the primrose sky and flew north with harsh clamour. Dick leaned out and gave their call back, clear and true and far on the warm air. The flight wavered, wheeled, and came circling. Dick called again, and they dropped with sounding beat of wings; realized man, and fled in a terror that gave them no quarter. Brodribb looked at the man by the rail.

"I reckon you never starved wherever you were located," he said, and Dick looked on the twilight with eyes that dreamed still of the long northern sedges.

"But I always preferred life's luxuries," he said. "Those of which moosenose and bear-tail are the equivalents."

"Give me caribou-tongue for luxury," said Caird, and his fine lined face was eager. "The tongue of a young caribou just before they separate in the ice-moon. There's no better feeding on earth."

"I ran across the female camp on the shores of some lake last winter," said Brodribb. "Thousands of 'em, pushing north to the sea, and their coats just prime. When is the Government sending a survey into that country, Caird? What say? Why, it was in west of Smith. A fine lake, and I named it Caribou, but I guess I won't find it any more unless I get hold of the Indians. It was on one of their stamping-grounds all right. Tepee-poles everywhere in the snow."

Grahame, the big Mounted Police boy, sat forward with hands gripped between his knees. His eyes were alight;

for the cold white nights and the tepee-ribs by the frozen lake where the caribou roamed were to him the land where he would be.

"And a fellow could shoot them—and shoot bear!" he said.

Dick looked at him keenly. To the far-scattered posts whose positions are shown on the Police maps by little red flags come many grades of men for Canada's serving. Sons of earls, some; medical students, and clowns and lumberjacks; men from all the regular armies of the earth; home-produced farmers, American broncho-busters, and everything in between. Hours ago Dick had placed Grahame as the younger son of some Scotch laird or baronet, and he guessed at the steady Scotch courage which the long winter patrols would not daunt.

"I've been held up half-a-day by caribou swimming Artillery Lake," said Caird. "It was a sheer black line of horns ruled across it, and they poured down over the crest of the hill like molasses out of a jug. We didn't dare bring our canoes near for fear of getting mixed up. So we paddled around and timed them. That bunch took exactly six hours and eighteen minutes to pass a given point. They weren't sloushing it any, either."

"Goo-od Lord," said young Grahame, and drew his breath in. "What a country! What a place to live in! Do you do everything on as big a scale as that?"

"I suppose that some of our men are the smallest things we have," said Dick dryly, and turned down the deck as Ducane came up the ladder. But young Grahame followed him.

"Excuse me," he said with the stately courtesy which made Dick put his choice in the baronet-father. "I hear that you know Fort Macpherson. Can you tell me anything about it, for I'm going there?"

Dick leaned on the rail. It had been nothing dishonourable which had brought this lad over-seas.

"You have come after adventure, I imagine," he said. "Well, you'll get it—if your idea of it happens to be the same as that of the Force. You will have to cut wood and haul it four or five miles—probably more. And the green fish for dog-feed usually has to come from Arctic Red River—about thirty-five miles. You'll go after that in the winter, through anything down to sixty or seventy below zero, instead of attending balls and Caledonian meetings. Some day you may shoot your bear or your moose to save your life—and may not save it then. There is the routine work, of course. And the patrols to Herschel Island—two-fifty miles each way. The Dawson patrols—considerably longer and harder; and perhaps another to Kittigazuit. You'll have to chase the mountain Indians for deer-meat for yourselves, and the river

ones for fish for dog-feed. The Peel hardly gives enough to last the summer." He smiled a little. "Have I frightened you?" he asked.

"Heavens!" said young Grahame. "It's like Fenimore Cooper and all the rest of 'em rolled into one. You've been through all that!"

"I have lived through it." Then Dick's face changed. "I wish you luck," he said. "I believe you are probably going to be a credit to us."

Grahame looked north to the faint stars that dipped to the waste of waters. Beyond them he was to find stars yet unseen, and his heart swelled high and hot in him. Scotland's sons have broken the trails of Canada through all the dim rusty centuries even as he himself would do. That kind of thing does not go into words, but there was something else which did.

"And I'll be able to shoot bear!" he said reverently.

For some days Dick kept eyes and ears ready for the clue which he sought. Then he discovered it—through Jennifer. He came along the upper deck to find her talking with Mrs. Carter, and there were some photographs spread on her knee. She looked up at Dick's step.

"I'm taking these up to show Mrs. Lowndes of the Hudson Bay," she said. "For I think they are some of the best Harry has. I hope he'll get as good this time. He has his big camera with him."

Dick put his pipe away and inspected the photographs. Among them were two of rolling prairie-land which were familiar. He had seen them in a pamphlet brought up by the German to whom Robison had sold his land. Shuffling a handful he managed to abstract one. And he did not feel ashamed of himself for doing so. Anyone who could dare fate as Ducane appeared to do deserved to have his challenge accepted. Presently Ducane and Robison came by. Ducane was more cheerful than usual, and he stopped graciously to be complimented on his work.

"Why, where did you get them, Jenny?" he said. "I never gave you all those."

"I found some plates in one of your drawers and printed these myself. And they are nearly as good as yours." She looked up at him saucily. "Wouldn't you think that was yours? And that? And that?"

Dick caught his breath as she held up the last. Had Ducane sufficient control? He had not. Blood suffused his eyes and skin instantly. He snatched it from her.

"What do you mean by meddling with my drawers?" he said fiercely. "By——, if I find you touching my things again—here; give me those!"

He swept the armful out of her lap and flung them overboard, and then Robison caught him by the arm and walked him off. And the suppressed fury on Robison's face was not a pleasant thing to see. Jennifer had courage. She looked at Mrs. Carter, and then she looked at Dick.

"I get just as cross when anyone pokes into my drawers," she said. "Harry hunted through them once for a necktie of his that I'd been wearing, and it took me a week to put them straight. I expect he's afraid of what he'll find when he gets back."

She laughed a little. But presently she got up and went away. Mrs. Carter turned to Dick.

"Does this kind of thing occur often?" she asked.

"Well—it varies according to circumstances," said Dick.

"Poor child," said the elder woman softly. "Poor, brave child."

Then she too got up and went away, leaving Dick alone on the upper deck, except for Bessait in the wheel-house. But Bessait lived in his own world up and down these hushed ways of men where no footprints are left on the trail, and his far-seeing gaze seldom homed to those about him. Dick shut the photograph into his pocket-book, lit his pipe again, and settled back to think in the manner Tempest knew so well; foot held over his knee by his hand; shoulders slightly stooped, and eyes dark and brooding.

He had enough now to warrant a search into Ducane's effects when he went back. His business at present was to see where those two went in Chipewyan; to whom they spoke, and what photographs they took. That he must do unseen. And then, when people began to rush Lake Athabaska land, it would go hard with him if he did not sheet the reason for it home to Ducane. Except that one photograph and Ducane's rages, which were not producible proof, he had nothing yet against Ducane which would stand in a law-court. Concerning Robison he knew much more. Link by link he went over in his mind the points which he did know.

Ducane had been supplying Robison with money lately; Dick had seen the cheques. Through Robison's assistance several breeds and one or two who had been supposed to be Indians had managed to prove themselves of sufficiently white extraction to receive scrip-land from Government. More than two of those grants had passed into Robison's hands publicly and been sold by him. The others probably belonged to him privately—or to Ducane. There was more drinking than formerly among the breeds—Dick believed he could account for that when he was ready. Trappers were getting in debt to the Hudson Bay Company and leaving it to trade with Robison. Dick had discovered one occasion on which

it was proved that Robison had paid twenty per cent. less than the Company gave. But the trapper was drunkenly happy about the matter, and a little later he gave up trapping and took scrip land. That had not yet passed to Robison—publicly.

Dick had had more than one conversation with the German who had settled on Robison's river-frontage, and he had found those conversations valuable.

"I enchoy you," said the fat German. "You have imatchination. When I egsblain to people that there is not the Canada Home-lot Egstention Gombany anywhere at all, they say 'Ridiggleous. We haf the papers see.' I say that I did go to their address and what do I findt? A blace on the groundt floor and a blace on the top where is a dirdy man who baints eggs-chru-chia-ting bigdures. And in bedween was a nod so young a lady selling babies' foodt. No Canada Home-lot Egstention Gombany there. Would I nod haf id seen?"

Dick felt more than a legitimate interest in the dirty man. But he did not say so.

"Of course," he said. "Your only chance lies in finding out from this end. You say nothing, and I say nothing. But we observe. And presently we know."

"Egsactly," said the German with a long breath. "Ah, you the imatchination haf, my friendt."

The German passed in review through Dick's mind. Then he summed up. To remove Robison that he might answer in some still cell for the passing of Ogilvie would cripple his own future operations very much. To arrest him on a charge of swindling the breeds out of their scrip-land might open up the whole affair. But Robison could hardly be tried for roguery after he had been condemned and hung for murder, and Dick dared not waive the knowledge which he had bullied out of Andree. He regretted that knowledge now. He wanted to make his big coup, and he did not yet see the way to do it. And then he heard Jennifer laugh in the saloon below, and it started him up on his feet to walk the deck with his face set and his eyes cruelly determined.

He could not leave this trail where the scent was so illusive and where his mind ran so sure and rapidly. He could not leave it, even for her. She would suffer for it presently, and so would he; and he would watch the struggles of both with a vivisecting eye because this great curious problem of life, swayed by emotion, and trapped by circumstance, and controlled by some undiscernible power had its grip on him and it would not let go. It possessed him, side by side with his love, and it made his face grow cruel as he walked.

"She is better without him," he said. "And she'll love

me in spite of this. By ——, she shall." Then his eyes narrowed, and he smiled slowly. " But it is more than possible that I'll pay heavily all the same," he added.

In the following days he told stories and sang songs and sketched sketches of the whole ship's company, until men talked apart of the suggestion of fear which he had flung into the bluff mask of Ducane's face, and the hint of tragedy in the soft features of the little " fur-pup." Jennifer spoke of this to Dick one evening when chance had left them alone on the upper deck with a breed at the wheel to hold the " Northern Light " on her clear course of scarlet where the dying sun lay bleeding.

" He wants it to send to his mother, poor little boy," she said. " Don't let him have it. You had no right to put that look in his face."

" I'm sorry. But I saw it. People say that I see too much, you know."

He smiled down at her with that hint of mockery which she saw seldom, and her lips quivered.

" If you have that power you will be held very responsible, some day," she said.

" I shall be very willing to meet my creditors. They have added much to the interest of life for me, and I hope they won't find me ungrateful. What do you think of the French Brother ? The man who never speaks—even to you ? "

" How can I think anything ? At table he pokes me and points to what he wants, and he won't look at me. Oh——" She took the sketch Dick put into her hands. " How like him. But—I hadn't thought—yes ; there *is* that look of repression and of exaltation about him somewhere. As if he had overcome greatly. But I never thought you would have seen that."

Dick took the sketch, pushing it back into his pocket.

" Why not ? " he asked very quietly.

Jennifer looked away to the reedy banks where the wild duck splashed. A faint grey knot of shacks and tepees stood against a wedge of dark pine-forest on the shore, and across the pure shining mauve of the river a canoe shot out, breaking level silver lines that ridged each wave from bank to bank. The " Hya—he-e-e-e " cry of the paddler came sharply, and Dick stooped.

" Why not ? " he said, and Jennifer looked up, half-laughing.

" Why—I have thought you were too materialistic," she said.

Dick glanced at her. Then he set his lips together ; drew a piece of millboard from a skin-case in his breast-pocket and put it into her hands. He watched her while she looked at it. In all warm, delicate tints it stood out ; a carefully, tenderly, finished portrait of herself, as unlike the bold, crude sketches

which he made of men as Jennifer herself was unlike them. The wistful lips were there and the brave half-dread in the eyes. Jennifer dropped it and hid her face. She felt as though this man had looked on her naked soul.

"Oh-h," she said.

The breeze swept the funnel-flag of bright wood-sparks across them. Dick brushed a gleam from Jennifer's shoulder, feeling her wince.

"No one else has seen it," he said.

"But—you have," said Jennifer, and her words were stifled.

"I could not help that, Jennifer," he said.

The name drew her eyes up to his. And she knew what they said and what hers answered as a man knows numbly the sentence of death when it is read out to him: knows it as a thing outside his control or comprehension; as a thing which is. She sprang up wildly, pushing her hands out.

"No!" she said with dry throat. "No! No!"

She ran past him and down the ladder, and Dick walked the little dusky deck for very long; quiet-footed, and forgetting his pipe, while the bells clanged off the hours and shunted them over, with all their prayers and passions, into eternity.

Once he stood still and laughed; half-angry, half-relieved. "It had to come, soon or late," he said. "But if I hadn't been a fool it would have been late. It was going to be bad enough to take the man before. It will be the very devil now."

He walked on slowly.

"But I've got to take him," he said. "I've cashed in every other mortal thing at the bank of my desires, but I'm damned if I'll let my brain go too. Ducane has got to justify me. And then I've got to justify myself—with Jennifer."

Down in the little bare cabin which she shared with Mrs. Carter Jennifer lay headlong on the sweet-grass mattress, gripping the pillow close over her eyes. She was terrified to the quick by the fierce life of the knowledge which had broken on her, and with stiff lips and dizzy brain she tried to pray herself back into the old ignorance. But always the merciless What Is scattered her will and denied her help.

"God!" she cried. "Oh, God! Oh, God!"

And then she shivered, pressing the pillow with shaking hands against her eyes.

Once, long, long ago, in those days when Ducane meant Heaven to her, Tempest had called her a civilizing influence. She felt a smile twitch her lips unmirthfully. A civilizing influence! She! She who knew the uncivilized elements of primal nature which are beyond all traditions, all help, all law. She who loved where she would have given her right arm not to have loved, and could not love where all her prayers

and duty lay. She who had touched suddenly to the heart of those huge forces which sway the immortal soul, and who had to face them, giddy and alone, with all outward interpretation driven back from eyes and tongue. For a brief while Jennifer was a raw soul struggling with eternal problems back of the crusted beams of time and the torn tie-ribs of old earth. Mrs. Carter came in softly; asked for and accepted the woman's eternal excuse of a headache; undressed and climbed into the upper bunk. Jennifer lay still with her eyes on the dark now, and the steamer moved on with the strange hush of midnight around it.

The engine heart-beat stopped suddenly with a shudder like the coming of death. Men called; moccasined feet pattered the decks and the gang-plank ran out with complaining squeals. Jennifer slid off the bunk and looked from the unglassed eight-inch window. The boat lay along a tall, dark bank where the pines were jewelled on their tops by the stars. A flare glowed redly over the gang-plank and over a string of silent, stooping figures which trod up it slow and burdened and ran back swift and lightly. To Jennifer came the fancy that each man brought his burden of sins across the bridge of repentance and turned earthward to his work again, glad and forgiven.

She had seen river-steamers wooding-up many times before this. But the dark pines and the white face of the stacked timber; the red, uncertain flare and the silent bowed procession moving in moccasined stealthiness took the blank reality from it. And then she saw Dick, treading the plank with sure light feet; bare-armed where he gripped the rough wood; bare-throated where the black head rose beside it. He passed, with a flickering dark shadow behind him, and Jennifer crept back to the bunk because she dared not watch for that figure again.

But long after the flare died out; long after the steamer sheered into the stream, and the talk and tread of men in the alley-way ceased, and the smell of tobacco grew fainter, Jennifer stole back to the window, and saw the stars wheel their courses under the eye of the moon. There was no sleep for her where all the world was dreaming.

For a man may sweat his present devils out by savage work. But a woman must pray them out—or let them stay.

CHAPTER VIII.

"ON THE ATHABASKA."

"WHO spilt that?" roared Ducane.

He lay on Chipewyan beach, with the red flare from the mosquito-smudges over him, and over half the population of Chipewyan where they celebrated the undoubted fact that the year's permits had come up from the South, and that it was the whole duty of man to see that no one drop of them remained upon another by daybreak.

Out of the dark and noisy ring where ribald songs and drunken laughter had gone up these four hours past a face thrust forward. There was moisture on the forehead and the skin by the nostrils glistened. But by the tight lips and the still keen eyes Ducane knew it.

"*I* spilt that drink of yours," said Dick. "And if you're civil you shall have another. But I won't wait on a man who talks like a drunken cad."

Ducane sat up. He was flushed with conquest because, a few hours earlier, he had forced a promise from Jennifer. She had given it, brief and low, and without emotion, and he was not afraid of Dick Heriot any longer. Jennifer would manage him now. Jennifer would keep him out of the way whilst he and Robison did the work which they had come North to do. He laughed.

"Better than acting like one," he said. "I could tell things of you, Corporal Heriot."

Dick shrugged his shoulders. He had spent unprofitable hours in trying to discover why Ducane and Robison had chartered beforehand the only tug in Chipewyan and what they were going to do with it. He had spent more in trying to decide whether he should arrest Robison now or whether he might gain more by letting him do his work. And finally, he had drunk with the revellers on the beach until his temper was acutely on edge and his restlessness almost beyond restraint.

"Tell them," he said. "I'll guarantee they're no worse than some we have heard from you to-night."

"Keep that you-be-damned nature of yours quiet, Heriot," advised Brodribb; and Ducane laughed again.

"It's the women can tell most, I guess. Maybe my wife——"

"Yes?" Dick's hands shut with a sudden jerk. "Your wife——?"

"She's lucky to have a husband who knows enough to look after her," sneered Ducane.

With a sharp curse Dick sprang up, and Lowndes caught at his leg.

"Steady, Heriot; the man's drunk," he cried.

"I'm not going to touch him"; Dick kicked himself free. "I have neither gloves nor boots on."

He swung down the beach into the dark, and Ducane looked after him in tipsy triumph. He had made Jennifer's task easier for her, and he had satisfied his own evil temper in the doing of it. He rolled over with a grunt, and thrust out his granite cup.

"Give me another drink, somebody," he said.

Dick went down the beach with face white and bitten lips. Insults to himself never troubled him, but this insult to Jennifer cut deep. And the truth of it stung.

Where the beach lay up to the forehead of the dark wood the factor's house showed, low and pale, palely, and there was something white beyond it which took the shape of a woman as Dick came near. He knew it at once. Jennifer had found the night too hot for sleep, and she had come out to look like Beatrice over the hedge of her innocence at those Dante-fires along the distance. Dick had kept himself apart from her since that night on the steamer deck, fifty hours ago. He had hurt her enough for the present, and her white face and strained eyes told it. By and by he would speak, and she would listen. But all that was good in him repented that he had done this when there was no escape for her from either Ducane or himself, and he trod past her now with head a little away and down, and a silent, suddenly-awkward salute. And at that moment he was near to the kingdom of heaven because of the reverence in him.

And then Jennifer laughed; laughed close beside him in the hot dusky night; laughed a little mocking laugh that brought the blood stinging to his face. He stood, dazed as though the laugh had been a blow.

"Weren't you going to speak to me?" she asked.

She stood with hands linked behind her and head cocked in that saucy way which she used to Slicker, and—in those age-old days when friendship was possible—to himself. Now—with the thing that lay between them. Now—when he

dared not lift his eyes to her—she could laugh, and she could look at him like that.

"I had thought that you would have preferred——" he began stupidly. But his head was singing. *Why* did she look at him like that?

"What made you come away from them?" cried Jennifer. "I can only stand a long way off and hear them laughing. We can never have such a good time, you know. *I* can't go and make offerings to Bacchus."

"He never objects to a Bacchante," said Dick.

He reddened, and would have taken it back, but Jennifer laughed again, rocking on heels and toes. Her whole attitude was daring, sharply vivid. She looked light as a cloud and as free. She was the essence of life, distilled to a burning drop, and Dick was not the man to look on her unknowing it. He caught his breath, coming near with tingling blood. This was not the white lady of his worship. It was not Jennifer. He did not know who it was. He did not know anything, but that he would have his hands on her presently.

She moved a few steps down the beach, looking back at him over her shoulder. And what she saw contented her. She was playing her game, full and fiercely as a woman can play it, and already she had puzzled the man. In one moment she had smashed all his theories and left his slower mind fumbling on the edge of something strange. And before he had grasped that with masculine decision she would be somewhere else. The spirit of illusion, of excitement, of snatching hot coals and dropping them with such swiftness that they would not burn was on her. She saw him follow, and she was glad, for her hate for him was as great as her love. He had flung her heart down from the secret place where she kept it, and he knew it. Now he was going to unknow it, while she discovered him for what he was. It would hurt her to see it, and she desired to be hurt. She desired to trick and baffle and shame him; to win all along the line for Ducane and for her wifehood calm again.

A canoe lay down the beach, nosing the water-ripple. Jennifer slipped in, a little white heap against the dark edge.

"Take me out where it is cool and black," she said. "I want to watch the fires."

Dick ran it out with one push; leapt in, and knelt, grasping the paddle. He shot over the water with long savage strokes until their outline was merged in the distant shore-line. Then he rested the dripping paddle and looked at her with her head among the stars as they floated in the dark between heaven and the red flames on the beach. He did not speak. He did not attempt to adjust the universe which she had cast in broken shards about him. He did not remember the difference

between right and wrong. The electricity of the night and of her nearness led him into the trap she set.

"Do you remember Browning's 'Two in a gondola'?" said Jennifer, idly dabbling her hand in the water. "I think a canoe is much nicer than a gondola."

"It's not," said Dick, who remembered over-well. "You can't move in a canoe."

"Why should you want to move?" said Jennifer innocently.

Dick bit his lip. He could be subtle in some ways, but he did not begin to know how subtle a woman can be when she has an end to gain.

"You know better than to ask that, don't you?" he said.

Jennifer laughed a very little. He was going to be just what she had expected him to be. He was going to kill that unlawful love with his own hand just as Ducane had killed the lawful love.

"Perhaps I am glad that you know better than to tell it," she said.

Dick drove the canoe further out. From the shore the delirium of the bagpipes and the smell of smoke came faintly. The hot night beat on his skin, making it hotter.

"How many women are you?" he said suddenly and thickly.

"Are you just beginning to find out that I am more than one?"

He was at a disadvantage already.

"I am beginning to find out that you are not the woman I thought you."

"Are you sure now that I am the woman you think me?"

Dick flung the paddle down.

"Let me come nearer and I'll tell you——"

"Wait!" She leaned forward and her voice was changed. "I want to ask you something. Would you do—for me—a thing that you did not want to do?"

The sweet true ring was back in her voice again. Dick paddled in silence. Then he said huskily:

"You can remember two nights ago and ask me that?"

The thrust made Jennifer wince. She had not expected it—not in that tone. Then she rallied.

"But how was I to know that *you* had remembered?" she asked.

"I—I had thought that was the only thing——" Dick stopped, and swift, bitter derision of himself swept over him. Had he been insanely careful of a thing which was not there? Had he been scourging himself for his cruelty to her while she had been laughing at his silence?

"Was it?" she asked.

"I suppose you realise that your question gives the answer to that," he said. "Sit still, for I am coming up to your end to talk to you."

She saw him move, and she sprang up instantly. Dick crouched, motionless, with his mouth dry.

"Sit down," he said. "For God's sake, sit down! I couldn't swim in with you from here."

A moment longer she stood, feeling in a sudden wildness that death was best—death was easier than life. Then she dropped back, controlled by her knowledge of God's "shalt nots." But her head was giddy. She had set herself to test Dick's real nature, and already she believed that she hated it. It was as necessary for her to prove the worthlessness of the man she loved as it was for her to hide the worthlessness of the man whom she did not love. It was as necessary for her to save Ducane as it was for Dick to destroy him, and for precisely the same reason. And she was going to win. But the knowledge of it burnt her like hot irons.

"Shall I tell you what it was I wanted you to do?" she asked.

"I'll do anything you tell me, you witch, so long as you don't try to drown yourself again. What is it, Jennifer?"

She leaned forward. There was only the worn-down butt of an old moon up in the sky, but its light was full on her face; that daring, mocking face which was not Jennifer's.

"You've promised," she said. "Now tell me. You came because Harry and Robison were coming."

His face changed. His natural suspicion awoke.

"What reason could there be for my coming after them?" he countered.

She shook her head, and the come-and-go smile on the crooked mouth excited him.

"Oh, you men," she said. "You can promise so gallantly; but when it comes to doing—why, where are you then?"

"If you would tell me why you want to know——"

"Are you bargaining with me—Dick?"

"No. No. I'll tell you. I have come to watch them. You must make up to me for this, you know, for I have practically put all I have in your hands by saying so."

"Then why did you say it?"

"You appeared to want it as a proof of my affection. Have you forgotten that already?"

His voice kept the thin edge of a sneer for all its ardour. She shut her nails close into her palm. Just now she hated him as she would never hate her husband. For she had never loved Ducane.

"But you can't watch then unless you know where they are going," she said. "I am not bargaining with you, Dick. I'll

tell you. They are taking the tug up to Lobstick Island very early in the morning—before anyone is awake."

She felt the canoe swerve at Dick's start, and she saw his eyes stare.

"Good God!" he said. Then, "Do you realise what you are saying?"

Jennifer had not told the first deliberate lie of her life without realising it.

"How much do you expect me to bear?" she cried in sudden passion. "If you want him take him. *Take* him, and let me be free—free of him and of you and of everyone. Oh, I'm tired of it all. I'm tired."

There was enough truth in this to put the real ring in her voice. Dick looked at her with his eyes hard and sombre. Then he turned his head with a slight shrug of his shoulders and looked out over the dark water. He was utterly stunned; utterly disgusted. This was Jennifer! This was the woman for whose sake he had so deeply regretted his past life! The bitter humour of his nature woke again. It was only the old game which life always played him. Always there was a worm within the apple; and always he had to bite to find it out; and always the mouthful sickened him. But never as now. Never as now; because he loved her and he had reverenced her. He looked at her again. She was leaning forward with her eyes lit and eager and her lips half-drawn back from the little sharp teeth.

"Thank you," he said. "I see that I have given myself a great deal of extra trouble. I might as well have come to you for the whole affair long ago. My knowledge of—women has been at fault again."

"But I wouldn't have told you until I knew that you cared for me," said Jennifer softly.

Her words turned him suddenly cold in the hot night. He picked up the paddle and drove the canoe homeward in a complete silence until the prow grounded in the squishy sand, and he sprang out into the little protesting ripples and reached his hand to her. He held it, looking down at her with the mocking contempt in face and voice.

"You deserve a kiss for that information," he said. "But you're not going to get it. You have probably sold your husband to me to-night, Mrs. Ducane, and if I buy that ends the transaction. I am not asking any commission. Good-night."

He turned on his heel and left her, walking straight up the beach to the barracks. Jennifer stood still, watching him; half-giddy yet with relief and thankfulness.

The lights were pulsing brightly on the shore, and the bagpipe skirl and the laughter came up fitfully. They had been

less than an hour away, but to Jennifer it had been many ages. She had won out for Ducane, because Dick would most certainly start for Lobstick Island at once. And she had lost for herself; lost for always, because she could never feel contempt for the man who had flung his contempt at her so unequivocally. She went back, and through the verandah-door to her own room, dropping wearily on the bed. For the fire that had charged her actions was spent, and the grey ash of it lay chill on her heart.

Dick went into the barracks and found Forsyth, the sergeant, preparing for bed. And he stood in the door and delivered his desires without circumlocution.

"I'll want you," he said. "And I want a boat that will sail. I'm starting up the lake for Lobstick in ten minutes."

The jar in walk and tone enlightened Forsyth. He knew of Dick as a man absolutely invaluable in his own class of work and utterly dangerous to thwart.

"Sure," he said placidly, and proceeded to get into his boots again.

He limped as he moved, quite perceptibly, for the tendons of his left leg were stiffened by an ice-cut won on a midwinter Yukon patrol. He had spliced and sewn up the wound and gone his way of two hundred miles and over. But he would never walk like other men again. Dick took belt and revolver from the bed-foot and buckled them on. He had left them there earlier in the evening.

"What's doing on the beach?" he said.

Forsyth was Dick's superior in the Force, but he had the wit to recognise the younger man's superiority in everything else.

"Why—they're mostly goin' home. Amazin' peaceable they are, too. Ducane was gittin' nasty, but Robison hauled him off some place. I guess he's watchin' out for Ducane these days."

"They're going to Lobstick," said Dick. "We're wanting to be there first. You must come yourself."

Forsyth swore liberally.

"Pshaw! I guess they'd be apt to hit the trail some twelve hours before we could raise it. D'you know how far it aims to be up to Lobstick?"

"I imagine it is as many miles for them as for us. And there's a breeze making right now. Are you ready?"

"Why it is going to take us two days—likely three."

"I intend that it shall be less than that. Who has a dinghy? Who? Very well. Meet me on the beach, for it's important that you come too."

Forsyth was there within twenty minutes. He had a smart young constable with him, and he poured directions out at

every step. Dick, superintending the stowing of water and provisions, turned to add his word also.

"Watch what time those two get off," he said. "And if they ask for me say I am drunk, or sleeping in. Take note of anything unusual you may see. And—Hinds, the 'Northern Light' won't go out till mid-day. Let no one know where we have gone. Say Forsyth is on patrol and I am drunk or sick—anything."

The night was blowing up dark and suggestive of thunder. Scattered white-caps showed here and there down the distance. It was a cross-wind, blowing in nasty, choppy puffs, and the powerful breed who helped Dick run the sail up predicted trouble very shortly.

"If it comes it comes," said Dick, and crouched down in the stern-sheets. "Don't be afraid to let her have all she can take, Honoré."

Honoré knew all that there was to know about a dinghy, and about a wind that bellied the sail and slapped it flat and endeavoured to unstep the mast all at one and the same moment. And they ran out into the swift-coming storm, with the combing of the wind about their ears and the growling of the thunder sending sullen echoes down the lake.

Dick had no conversation to give Forsyth as the boat tacked and swung and drove on her beam until the upper strakes foamed with white lips. He was planning what he would do with clear-minded decision. He would watch those two at the work which they were doing, and if that gave him no hold he would arrest them both on the face-value of that photograph which he carried. In all probability he could frighten the whole affair out of Ducane. And if he could not; if he failed, and broke and spoiled it all, what did that matter? There were more things spoiled in this world than a man's work. But Ducane would turn King's evidence and sell every soul of them all to ransom his coward's skin. Concerning Jennifer's part in this his beliefs were unshipped and astray, and a heavier wrath held him than the dark wild wrath of the sea. For it was the impotent anger of a strong soul struck in the dark and blindly struggling to hit back again. Since he had cleared himself of the old truths he had forsworn his God with light lips and trampled the great threat of the afterward under a reckless heel. Jennifer had stripped that sheltering harness off him and left him naked to the doctrine of Retribution; not in words, but in the knowledge that he had lost the power to do the good thing so far as he could see it. Under her pure eyes he had tried—sometimes—to crawl up to the good. And now she had taken that which she gave and made a hideous thing of it, thrusting his unbelief out into belief savage and more bitter still. He had banished the gods of his

youth; but out of the storm they mocked at him, gibbering in the lightning and chuckling in the wind.

From the black cloud-breasts the lightning jetted in great, ragged handfuls, and once Forsyth saw Dick's face clear in the yellow gleam of it. He sucked in his breath as he looked, and for a moment he forget the lesser death which reached long arms at him over the gunwale and whistled shrill derision in his ears. For the man who knelt gripping the sheets and staring into the night with the water streaming off him was surely tasting a greater death. That face would be merciless to the utter need of woman or man. And it would be worse than merciless; it would laugh.

Out of the south-west the storm smote fully. It struck the little boat sheer on the quarter, heeling her over until the cant jerked a curse of terror out of Forsyth. The water was running ankle-deep along the bilge, and Honoré sprang to slack the sail-ropes. But Dick was before him.

"Let her have it," he shouted, and the words came thin and weak upon the gale. "She can stand up to it. Let her have it. By——, we've got to drive her."

"You'll drive her under in less'n no time," yelled Forsyth, bailing on his knees.

Dick gave no answer. He was battling with Honoré to secure the foresheets. From his expression Honoré was evidently objecting. But the words were blown out of his mouth, leaving him with distended cheeks and eyes where the round white showed. The men were flung this way and that as the stout little boat fought for its life, and the high waves slapped over them and through the wet shrillness of the wind came the boom-boom of thunder-guns. For three hours they hung on the edge of eternity, stiffened and bruised and beaten. But the knots of the black lake flew by beneath the counter, and when the saffron dawn caught the sky Honoré cleared his eyes.

"By damn," he said. "I t'ink we come très queek, moi. I vas s'pose we be to Lobstick in four, seex heures."

"Trappin' lynx isn't a circumstance to boatin' wi' you, Heriot," said Forsyth, straightening his cramped limbs cautiously as the great waves took the red of the sun on their crests and sank under it. "There's no waitin' for reinforcements when you go into action."

Dick said nothing. He was looking forward with keen eyes to the moment when he should get his hands on Ducane. And then he would go back and take his reward from Jennifer. For he had been a besotted fool last night.

Through the day they ran on with a strong clear wind behind them. To the left little islands gathered, separated, and slid by, rough with scrub-pine and soft with young blooming willows. The sky toned to hottest hazy blue that stooped to

meet a hazy sea. And nowhere down the distance could the keen, searching eyes pick up the smoke-trail that would be the Hudson Bay tug coming up from Chipewyan. The sun was yet high, though seven hours had gone by since noon, when the dinghy slid between Lobstick Island and the jutting mainland and Dick went ashore, seeking information. He found reindeer moss and willows and pines bent with the wind. He found a dead beaver, and white ash where a camp had been. Then he came back.

"Best cache the boat and stay ashore," he said. "Someone's bound to turn up before long."

Forsyth looked round with dubious eyes. The very air of the place smelt of something given over to the grey gull and the musk-rat.

"What would you suppose they want to come here for?" he asked.

"How should I know? Fond du Lac Indians in it, likely."

Forsyth made doubtful noises in his throat and flung himself down in the soft warm moss. "I guess——" he began, and slept with the words in his mouth yet.

Honoré was already sleeping, unrestrained and peaceful. But Dick had never been more fully awake in all his life. He was strung up to tension that would give him no rest until this business was put through, and he smoked two pipes scarce knowing it, clenched grimly in his thoughts. With the third he began to grow restless. For in all that wide far sweep of blue there lay no smudge of smoke; in all the green silence behind there came no sound of life; no straggling camp of Indians to set their tepees up and to make their fires, even as Honoré had done, against the mosquito-army. He walked and watched, but he did not doubt, and it was Forsyth who flung the first bomb over the supper at a later hour.

"Where did you get your information?" he demanded suddenly of Dick.

"From a reliable source," said Dick curtly.

"You can bank on that?"

"Certainly."

Forsyth wrinkled his eyes up, drawing under lee of the smoke.

"They say you've never been caught," he remarked. 'Otherwise I'd go bail as this were a put-up job. 'Taint the first time I've experienced such things. Robison's about up to all the tricks there are."

"The information did not come through Robison."

Dick's tone invited no more speculation; but when the long, sunlit evening drew to ten o'clock Forsyth came seeking the younger man where he stood with feet lipped by the lake-waters.

"What are you goin' to *do*?" he demanded. "Don't you reckon the fellow who told you is liable to be makin' a mistake?"

Dick wet his dry lips.

"I don't think so."

"I do. I reckon they've been goosing you, Heriot. They've likely gone across to Manawi or Claire, an' when we git back we'll find the whole thing put through an' swallered an' Ducane lickin' his lips like a cat that's just polished off the canary."

Dick looked at him with the tired eyes which had lost the power even to smile at himself.

"I don't think so," he repeated, and walked away.

But at daybreak he woke the two who slept, and suggested a return.

"You reckon you have been tricked then?" demanded Forsyth, sitting up.

"Yes," said Dick very quietly. "I reckon I have been tricked."

Forsyth followed down to the boat. He was a mild man himself, and Dick's face made him uneasy.

"My word," he said. "I wouldn't like to be the joker who served him that sauce."

It was on the evening of the fourth day that a little dinghy beached on the red Chipewyan sands where the big-shouldered dogs and the children seeking scraps of dried fish in the heeled-over boats gave welcome.

Forsyth limped more than usual as they climbed the slope to the barracks, but Dick burst in on Hinds before the constable could rise up from his supper and stare. Dick's clothes had been wetted and dried on him twice; his skin was rain and wind-beaten and lined, and the beard-growth was black on his face. But his manner showed neither agitation nor weakness.

"Where is Ducane?" he asked, and over his shoulder Forsyth gave a mild echo.

"Why, that's the devil of it, don't you know," said Hinds. "We've got Robison, but Ducane has disappeared."

The sudden exclamation was in Forsyth's voice. Dick walked to a chair in silence; dropped down, and pulled out a notebook.

"Tell me what you know," he said.

Forsyth looked at the cooling supper, sat down and filled a plate. Hinds said:

"Why, you know, I couldn't have touched Ducane in any case. But you told me to watch out, so I did the best I could. They must have got off in that storm sometime; but we didn't know they hadn't gone up the Lake until the tug came

back from Rocky Island two days ago with only Robison and Mrs. Ducane aboard."

"*Mrs.* Ducane?" said Forsyth, glancing up.

"Exactly. A hand on the tug told me there'd been some sort of a pow-wow with Indians in Quatre Fourches Channel, and it seems probable that Ducane slipped off there. Likely he has got them to take him up it to join the Peace, and he means to get out that way. Or he could get down the Slave to the Arctic."

"What about Robison?" interrupted Dick.

"I've made sure of *him*," said Hinds in broad content. "Arrested him on the Ogilvie business, and he didn't kick worth a cent. But I can't get a word about Ducane out of him—or out of Mrs. Ducane either." He paused a moment. "Ripping good luck I nailed Robison, wasn't it?" he said.

"Sure! It could only have been better if you hadn't."

"Why——" Hinds went red. "What the deuce do you mean?" he said.

"We won't get information from Robison any more." Dick stood up. "He can't save himself from the gallows by betraying Ducane, and so he'll hold his tongue to spite us all. Can I go to your room and clean up, Forsyth?"

"You sure can. Where is Mrs. Ducane, Hinds?"

"At Lowndes', of course. I guess Robison was meaning to get back south on his own, but I don't know what she expected to happen to her. A very peculiar business altogether."

"Why——" began Forsyth, and then, over the broken meats, Hinds told him several things which presently sent him hastily in to Dick.

"There's quite a good deal of talk about this goin' around," he said.

"Ah!" Dick was shaving with stretched jaws, and he did not appear interested. Forsyth sat heavily down on the cot.

"Who's to say those two didn't put an end to Ducane out there? Robison would likely make his pile out of the transactions they've been through together, and Mrs. D. must have hated the brute. And—there's more than one says she had a fancy for someone you know. I guess you understand how news travels on the Rivers, Heriot."

"Ah! What an innocent and friendly old world this is. I am going to see Mrs. Ducane now, Forsyth; and I think I can promise that she will tell me all I want to know. Yes; I think I can promise that."

"Did she send you up to Lobstick, Heriot?"

"No."

"I believe that's a damned lie, you know. She did. You'd best be careful, or you'll be in the soup yourself presently. Can't you guess what fellows are saying about this business?"

Dick looked at him with half-shut eyes and a slow smile.

"No," he said. "I can't guess. How could you expect me to?"

All the world swam in a warm yellow haze of evening when Dick came on to the wide verandah where Lowndes sat smoking with his wife beside him. The children ran to him, and he lifted one wild-haired little imp and kissed her.

"Well, Jack," he said. Then he looked over her head and smiled at Mrs. Lowndes.

"I am afraid I must be uncivil enough to say that I didn't come to call," he said. "I came to see Mrs. Ducane. Would you tell me where I can find her?"

Mrs. Lowndes stood up nervously. Her heart was bobbing in her throat.

"Certainly. She is in the side room; fourth down the passage. She—she has had a trying time, Mr. Heriot. I—I hope you will remember that."

"Most assuredly, Mrs. Lowndes. And I will only keep her a short while. No; please don't trouble to come with me. I can find my way quite easily."

He walked down the dusky passage, and presently Mrs. Lowndes heard a door shut crisply. She looked at her husband with a little shiver.

"I'm afraid of that man, Gregory," she said. "He looks so—so cruel."

"Well, what can you expect? You know what people are saying—and so does he, if she doesn't. If he's innocent he's got to get all she can tell out of her—and sharp, too. Emmett doesn't care about having a disappearance off his tug, and he's lodged complaints with Forsyth already in order to clear himself. It's a case of suspected murder, anyway."

"But why can't they be content with asking the men——"

"They *have* asked the men. Hinds has done nothing else these two days. And he has had Jackson patrolling Quatre Fourches Channel for information, too. It's impossible that Mrs. Ducane can't know——"

"If you dare to believe that she had a hand in it——"

"I reckon I can believe anything," said Lowndes philosophically. "Or nothing. It's not our business, Amy. I fancy Heriot will sort all he wants out of this mess, anyway. He has all his senses, that fellow."

In the side room Jennifer sat by the window looking out on the silver lake streaked with dark shadows. She had the last Lowndes baby in her arms, and her grasp tightened round it instinctively when she looked up and saw Dick at the door. He came to her in silence, walking lightly, and his face showed something of the strain which he had been through.

"Please allow me," he said quietly, and stooped, drawing

the sleeping child from her with the manner of one clearing decks before action. He laid it in the seat of a big chair and came back to her, with a very faint smile on his lips. But it was not the smile which she had seen there last.

" I have come to pay my debts," he said pleasantly, and pulled a chair up, sitting opposite to her, and leaning forward. " You have won quite a good deal from me, Mrs. Ducane. I suppose you understand that ? "

She did not lift her eyes from the wrist-muscles of the shut hand across his knee. But she felt her own hands and feet getting cold. There was nothing familiar in this man, and there was nothing in her which knew how to answer him.

" Of course we both know how you managed it," said Dick. " You knew where I was weak, and you took advantage. I don't reproach you, for I know that women like to work that way. But you will not find me weak any more, Mrs. Ducane."

Jennifer did not speak. She was trying to remember the Dick she had known : the courteous, kindly friend who had helped her over so many hard places. There was nothing left but the courtesy, and that was congealed almost into threat.

" You know what I came here for ? " said Dick softly. " I came for you to tell me what you have done with your husband."

" I can't," she said sharply, and a shudder ran through her.

" I assure you that he cannot escape if he is living. You have not the least idea of our power and organisation. He cannot get out of Canada from here, and he cannot stay in it long without our knowledge. You can do no good by holding your tongue. But you can do much harm."

" To whom ? "

" To yourself." He would not add his own name. " You know that people are saying that he has been made away with ? The captain of the tug has already lodged an accusation against you. It is unsupported. I believe it to be unsupportable. But you can only prove that by telling the truth now."

There was no mercy in his voice. She knew that he was in a white heat of anger at the check to his plans and the blow to his pride. And she knew how the knowledge that she had taken advantage of his love to make him betray his duty would cut very deep. She had scarcely resented what that duty was leading him to do. Her own recognition of the word explained the matter for her, and she did not think of the ways in which he had come by his knowledge.

" I cannot tell you," she said. " I promised."

" You will break that promise. I came here to see that you do. Cannot you understand that it is necessary for your safety that you should ? "

Jennifer leaned back and her lips closed. Dick looked at her with his eyes darkening. There might be trouble for himself later, but there was trouble for Jennifer now. She was so little and white, and his love for her was as great as his anger against her. It would be greater in a little while, when he had time to be thankful for the interpretation of the Jennifer of the canoe. But through the long hours in the dinghy his terror had been lest Robison had escaped; lest Andree had sent him word in some way. Fear of that disgrace had half-maddened him, and he could not easily forgive the cause.

Then he leaned forward, keeping his eyes on her; and he questioned her over and over in various ways; steadily, mercilessly. His voice seemed a great hammer beating on her brain; on her heart. A cry broke from her at last.

"Don't. Oh, don't. I can't bear it," she cried.

"Where is he?" said Dick, and put his hand on her arm when she would have risen.

"I can't——I can't tell you——"

"Where is he?"

"O——stop——"

"Where is he?"

Then the tears came, and she flung herself sideways, hiding her face in the arm of the chair. Dick sprang up, stooping over her.

"For God's sake quit torturing us both," he said thickly. "Don't you understand that I've got to make you?"

"You can't make me," she sobbed. "You can't. You can't."

He was coming to believe it. Such a resolute will in this small creature had been beyond his understanding. But he was coming to believe it. Then he used his last weapon.

"Laroupe's scows are tracking up to Grey Wolf to-night. I am taking Robison on them. If you won't speak I must take you, too, for Emmett has definitely charged you with Ducane's disappearance. It will be probably a month's journey or even more. You and I will be the only white people, and our names have been coupled together too much already. But I have no choice. That is for you. Will you be good enough to tell me what you decide to do?"

She lifted her head and looked at him. The unconscious reproach in the wistful eyes and lips nearly shook his control.

"I have no choice, either," she said. "You know that well."

"As you will." He shrugged his shoulders. "Then I must ask you to be ready in an hour. The men prefer to track at night during the full moon."

He went out and spoke a few civil words to Mrs. Lowndes. But she saw that his face was set and strange. Then he took Lowndes down to the gate with him.

" Mrs. Ducane won't speak," he said, " and she will have to come back on the scows with me. Will you and Mrs. Lowndes allow Jack to come along too ? It is a long journey for a lady to take alone."

Lowndes asked some questions, receiving concise answers. Then he said :

" I'll speak to my wife, but she won't make any difficulty if we can possibly get the kiddie's kit together in the time. Don't thank me. I am glad to do it for you both."

To Jennifer little seemed real through the following hours. In the house was talk and hurry and the excited voices of children. On the tug which took them to meet the scows at the mouth of the Athabaska River there was the smell of cool air on the night-breeze ; there were many dark slouching men moving in and out of the lamp-light, and there was Mrs. Lowndes close beside her with Jack on her knee. On the beach at last was red sand where a mosquito-smudge flared ; a broad, black breast of forest beyond it, and, all along the lip of the water, the great forty-foot scows, dark and heavy, with willow rickers and tarpaulins rigged over the sterns of a few. All was movement and chuckling laughter and sudden calls and shouts as the trackers got themselves into the harness with light-hearted horse-play ; and the wiry, springy strength of the North was in their muscles, even as its keen power was in their eyes. Lowndes spoke at Jennifer's side.

" This leading scow is yours, Mrs. Ducane. Heriot thought you'd like the rickers bare as it's such a hot evening. Yes — say good-bye to her, mother. It's time they were off. Let me help you up the plank, Mrs. Ducane. That's right. Drop over. Jack, you young sinner. Wait till I come for you."

With Mrs. Lowndes' warm kiss on her lips Jennifer dropped inside the tall sturgeon-head which was to be her home for so long, and felt her feet on a grey yielding floor of fur-bales. The scow smelt and whispered of strange things ; of loneliness, and of the cries of little animals that had died, and of the men who did these cruel things and did not care. Then Jack slid down beside her with a crow of delight, and immediately scrambled up again to shout her good-byes. Lowndes' bearded face showed over the edge.

" Comfortable down there ? " he asked cheerily. " That's right. Eusta will make up your beds in five minutes. Who's steering this scow ? You, Ooti ? Good. Take care of my kiddie. Tell her keyam upe if she climbs around too much."

The big breed showed white teeth as he stepped on the hinder decking and leaned to the sweep, tall and finely poised as a statue. And then the long scow surged forward with a groan and a spewing-up of sand and water ; the talk and

laughter died; the group of figures on the strip of beach slid behind, and Jack began to sniff ominously. Jennifer stooped to give comfort. And when she looked again the fires from a big Indian camp cast a red glow along the beach, and, black and strong across the face of it, swung the trackers; leaning deeply in the traces; swaying bodies and loose arms; the nine keeping step as one and passing out of the light to give place to the nine of the scow behind. As she looked a man raised the chant. It surged by her; surged back, and burst out in a volley from each mellow throat that knew the voyageur call of the other days.

"Huh! Huh! Huh! We come. We come. Huh! Huh! Huh! We come!"

The naturally dauntless spirit in Jennifer waked. She sat up. And Jack, squirming about her with restless arms and legs, cuddled into her suddenly.

"Oh," she cried. "I guess we're going into the fairy-tale place where the dreams belong."

"You darling," said Jennifer, and laughed with a delicious feeling of excitement. "Perhaps it will be a fairy-tale place, Jack."

Then she too passed on into the dark, and from behind she heard Dick call her name.

"I am in the next scow," he said, and his voice came clear across the gap. "If you want anything call me. Have you all you need?"

"Yes, thank you," called Jennifer, with a new resiliency in her voice. And as she said it she realised that, for the first time in very many months, she had all she needed. Freedom from the almost unsupportable life with Ducane; peace, and the soothing of nature in the hush of the night; the unjarring glide of the scow, the dear familiar stars and the scent of the wind's warm breath. Above her came the low creak of the decking where Ooti swung his weight from one noiseless foot to the other, and at her side Jack snuggled, close and soft. The voice across the water had held the old protecting kindliness of other days, and she tried to cling to that, forgetting what had come between.

Day by day the tread of a host passed up the long river reaches; the tread of the brown men to whom the brown earth was the natural heritage. Again they took the trails which their voyageur forefathers opened in hours of fierce adventure and grim horror; trails which shall be closed for ever on that labour when the white men drive their railroads down, far and farther, until the engine-roar drowns out the beat of the moccasins, and big cities rise where the tepees fall and the men of the outer ways go, keen-eyed, keen-eared and silent, before the in-wash of the city men.

But when Jennifer went up the Athabaska it was still the place where the dreams belong, and through all the after years the stray tang of green wood smoke was to bring her a sharp thrill of longing for the North-West rivers again ; for the hot, dry smell of the forest, and the short barks from a clearing where a red fox led her young to play in the moonlight ; for the flowering vetches round her feet with the golden-rod, and the bird-calls from hidden singers as they passed, and the great cranes that flew against the sunset with long legs rudder-like behind. To Jack the days were sunshine and gladness only ; from breakfast in the cook-scow, sitting with granite plate on restless knees among the boxes of tinned foods, to the fresh-cut bed of blue-joint grass or spruce branches in the white tent pitched on some lonely shore where the sandpiper ran and the cliff-swallow called. But for Jennifer, because no older palate can take life without the seasoning, pain was mixed with all the pleasure.

And yet Dick's endless tact and thoughtfulness made the world very truly a place of happy dreams. Outwardly he seemed just the friend of old, with his flashes of cynicism and hardness for others, but never anything but gentle deference for her. And yet the change was acute, and she knew it. For all his quiet courtesy and his nonsense with Jack she knew well that he was only waiting, tightening the bond between them with skilful, unerring persistence. He was only waiting, and by and by she would need all her powers for the battle that would come. But he made those days so beautiful for her ; days of intimate friendly talk, of arguments on all things that were and were not ; of song and laughter and silent times over the camp-fires when Jack had gone to bed.

And she knew that he was reading her ; better than she could ever read him, and that he was a little amused, perhaps, at her scruples in small things, and at the prayers which she persuaded Jack to say each night, and which Jack once, to Jennifer's embarrassment, decided to say at Dick's knee before she went to bed.

" Land of Liberty ! " said Jack, with a shake of her black elf-locks, " Why not ? I'd be much gooder if I said them by the fire than if I hurried over them in the tent, for I could take my time here. Couldn't I, Mr. Heriot ? "

" Certainly," agreed Dick. " Say all you want to, Jack. Which knee is to be the altar ? "

It was the first time Jennifer had heard that tone to Jack, and she bit her lips as Jack chose the knee with care and bowed her shock head. Jack marshalled all her family with determination, even to the guinea-pigs left behind. Dick heard her ask a blessing for Jennifer, and then he started at his own name.

"And please take care of Mr. Heriot and make him a good man amen good-night Mr. Heriot."

The quick, sticky kiss on his lips full-stopped the words. Jack whirled; bestowed a second on Jennifer, and tore headlong up the beach, singing as she ran. Dick gazed after her reflectively.

"Was that her wording or yours?" he asked.

"Oh, hers, of course. You heard her ask to be made a good girl herself."

"I did," he turned to her with amusement. "And I heard her place you in the category with her parents and the guinea-pigs as those who are presumably above improvement."

"I have told her that it is want of respect," said Jennifer in distress. "But you know Jack."

"And she evidently knows me." He laughed at her troubled face, but the laugh hardly rang true. "Please don't apologise. I am flattered at her interest."

But he sat silent for a while after that, and then she heard him singing softly a little French song of Swinburne's which Jack had objected to as "silly" earlier in the evening.

"Toi, mon âme
Et ma foi,
Sois ma dame
Et ma loi;
Sois ma mie,
Sois Marie,
Sois ma vie,
Toute à moi!"

Jennifer went away, leaving him singing, and Dick smiled more than once before he got up, seeking the tent which he shared with Robison. The natural instincts of the breeds took them up to the forest on the cliff-top, where each rolled in his blanket and slept where he lay. But Dick never let Robison out of his sight for long, although the man had shown no interest in anything since the first conversation which he had had with Dick in the cell at old Chipewyan.

"Who told on me?" he asked then; and Dick, watching with interest, made answer:

"Grange's Andree."

He saw the big breed's chest sink and his shoulders bow down as though he had been struck in the wind, and he knew that this primitive man was torn in the agony of love and hate even as he had been himself. This interested him, but it displeased him. Human nature had not climbed so much higher in the essentials after all. At last Robison glanced up, and in his face was that curious high look which Tempest had once seen there.

"If I plead guilty that ends it up?" he said. "Andree's out of it?"

"It's ended anyway. I fancy you're just about all in, my friend," said Dick. "Of course it will simplify matters if you don't want to fight."

"I don't want to fight," said Robison slowly. "I done up Ogilvie."

Watching him a faint gleam of suspicion came to Dick. Any man with such good red blood in him as Robison fights by nature for his life.

"Why?" he asked suddenly.

"He—he——" The unready stammer quickened Dick's suspicions. "He showed me a picture you made of me."

"Ah! Don't you think you punished the wrong man, then? I might have made some more."

"If Ducane ain't found his missus is responsible, ain't she?"

This let in a flood of light under which Dick staggered. Through that sketch he had quite certainly found out what Robison was like.

"How about yourself?" he said, and his voice was unmoved. "Were you going back to open that cache you made?"

Hinds had found Ducane's camera and several bundles of notes hidden in a bank by the Quatre Fourches Channel, and Dick was taking them up to Grey Wolf with him. There may have been other work done; but this was a piece of sure proof which, nevertheless, was valueless until he and Tempest had gone through Ducane's papers.

"I was fixed all right if that smart young constable hadn't been a bit too smart. I don't mind him. But you," Robison straightened up suddenly. "You're one o' these damned lot what's always interferin' wi' a man. Tempest was after my gel, an' you bin after me. I hate the whole bunch o' you. But you're the pick of 'em." He spat on the floor of the cell. "That's what I think o' *you*," he said.

"You are welcome. Probably I should think precisely the same in your position, although I might not have the grace to tell it. But since you do think that of me you must not object if I put you out of action so far as I consider fit when we go up the Athabaska."

Robison made no objection. The salt of life seemed to have gone out of him, and he let Dick do as he would. There was no information to be got from him, and Dick, understanding this, began to shape the plan by which he must help Jennifer when the time came. But because this plan was going to require of him something which he did not want to give, his selfishness made him require from Jennifer also something which she did not want to give.

Jennifer knew that Dick would require it of her some day. She guessed what his eyes could show when the cynical indifference or bold command went out of them, and she guessed what that dominant temper which submitted so instantly now to her wishes would want to do. But she was not afraid. Through these weeks she had gone over and over this awful and beautiful thing in her heart: moulding it with prayers; softening it with tears, and building up, word by word, all that she would say to Dick when he spoke to her at last. Ducane could have no more love of hers. She knew where all that had gone, and from the first agonised moment of understanding she had known what she must do with it. Never once did she think that this great love could be less wonderful, less sacred, less beautiful to Dick than to herself. It was to be a glorious renunciation, an ennobling for them both, and on the last night before the scows drew in to Grey Wolf she sat alone over the camp-fire in the hush that bore only the wash of the water and the cry of a far-off white owl, and thought of it with a tremulous smile on her mouth.

Dick's tread sounded up the pebbles of the beach. He had been bathing, and she saw the glow on his skin as he came round the fire and sat on the log beside her. She put her hand out in sudden fear.

"Not to-night," she said. "Oh, not to-night."

"I think it has got to be to-night, Jennifer," he said. "I must speak, and you must listen."

She shut her hands together, trying to marshal all those arguments again.

"I want to know if you have any real objection to divorce?" he said.

"N-not in the abstract."

"Never mind the abstract." She heard the amusement in his voice. "I am not making conversation just now. I want to know your personal objections to it. For that is going to come, you know."

"No! No! Oh, never. There is no reason——"

"He has deserted you. And it would be easy to prove that he has ill-treated you. Very many of the States would give a divorce for less. Morally, I do not see any necessity for these things. Marriage is, and always has been, purely a social matter. But on the social side I acknowledge the necessity. I want to make arrangements for putting it in hand at once. We cannot go on so much longer, Jennifer. Don't you know that this month has tried me nearly as far as I can stand?"

There was a depth and a tenderness in his voice which she did not know. She shrank away from it, and from his eyes.

"You have been so good to me. But I must hurt you.

I must tell you—there is something in life which is better than having what we want. It is giving what we have."

Her words came in little gasping sentences. Dick looked at the fire. It seemed as though he had expected something of the sort, for the amusement was in his eyes again.

"I—I wouldn't divorce Harry if I could. He needs my help. He may come back for it. And then I must give it. One can't help love. But one can help marriage, and I had no right to marry if I didn't intend to—to mean it for better or for worse. I must keep my oath. I can't break it while he lives."

In the little detached sentences her voice shook and hurried and failed. Still Dick did not speak. She had prayed that he would give her the chance to say what she wanted, and he was giving it, quite fully. But in some strange way this did not help her. His silent personality had its effect beyond her will. She was realising vividly how little she knew of him: how much battle and thought and decision and temptation had gone to his making apart from anything which she could guess at in him. Then she began again; dragging out those carefully-planned sentences which were to convince and comfort him. She spoke of the glory of self-renunciation, the help of prayer, the sacredness of a love which is strong enough to slough off the earth-ties. Still Dick watched the fire, saying nothing. But his eyes were dark and brooding. He was remembering that flame in Tempest's eyes when he spoke of his Norse legends; he was noting the shake in the earnest, girlish voice using the simple sweet words which reflected her heart. And he was looking for the first time on an innocence which barred the door against wrong more effectually than all knowledge can do.

At last she stopped. She had said some of the things which she had meant to say; said them badly, perhaps, but he would understand. He must have understood, for he sat so still with his lips shut, staring into the fire. Why did he sit so still? Had she hurt him too deeply? Had she shown too high a path for him to tread at once? Or had she perhaps said more than was necessary? More than was womanly? Her face flamed suddenly, and her pulses drummed in her ears, and her eyes went blind. Then he spoke. His voice was very gentle; almost pitying.

"You don't know very much about men, Jennifer," he said.

Jennifer felt sharply flung back on herself. She had expected anything but this.

"I—I—perhaps not," she stammered.

He turned on the log and took her hands.

"We are not like that, Jennifer," he said. "When we want a thing we go on trying until we get it. At least, most of us do. I do."

His voice was very quiet, very convincing. It made Jennifer feel more helpless than she had done in all her life. He lifted her hands to his lips; kissed them, and let them go.

"I will do you all the reverence you deserve," he said. "But I will not let you go out of my life. Did you really ever think I would?"

"Oh," she said, feeling the tingling in her hands. "That is all wrong. We have to sacrifice something——"

"I have no objection. I am willing to sacrifice anything—so long as it is not you—or myself."

There was more than a suspicion of raillery about him now. He was humorously humouring her, just as he did Jack. She sprang up, struggling for her self-restraint. For her heart was fighting with Dick against her.

"Oh," she cried. "We must end this now—for altogether. I can't. I never can. I——"

He was on his feet beside her, and his smile hurt her.

"Do you think you can end it?" he asked. "You? I have got to give you pain yet, Jennifer, and I have got to give myself much more. But that will not end it. And when this wretched business is over and you see what I have done to you, *that* will not end it. I know you better, and I know myself."

She felt his eyes on her, but she could not lift her own.

"Poor little girl," he said. "Don't fret any more. We'll talk of this again when I come to your own house."

He took her cold hand gently.

"Good-night," he said. "The matter is in my hands more than yours. Don't grieve yourself about it."

Then he left her, and she watched him go down the white path of moonlight to his own tent. And she felt utterly impotent; utterly weak and inadequate. Quietly and courteously he had put aside all her carefully-prepared arguments as one puts away childish toys—things which the man-mind had outgrown. He was one of those who hear what they themselves say, not what the other person says. But she had not known it until now, and now it was too late. She shivered in the creeping shadows of that tree-top army. Was his masculine mind as much stronger than hers as his masculine muscles were stronger? Even the difference between her light, noiseless step and his swinging tread up the beach, crushing the pebbles and spurning them out under his feet, frightened her. She began to realise for the first time where she stood. She might say "I will not," but she had let another factor into the matter now. And she knew too little of it, of its hidden forces and currents and dynamic powers to be able to guard against it. Besides, her heart was on the side of that factor, although her soul was not.

A little while longer she stood, listening to the wash of the river. Then slowly, and with wet eyes, she went up to her tent.

CHAPTER IX.

"YOU UNDERSTAND."

"HERE'S Tempest to see you, honey."

Jennifer unlocked the door of Ducane's study and came out reluctantly, holding it shut behind her. Her face was white and her eyes startled; and Dick, standing out in the night behind Tempest, knew why in a swift flash of intuition, and cursed the five hours which had passed since Slicker brought her home. But here he was the under-officer only, locked silently back into the law which bound him, and he saluted her and stood still while Tempest took her hand.

"I have come on a disagreeable errand," said Tempest. "But I would have had to come earlier if court cases hadn't detained us. I am sorry to say that it is necessary for us to take charge of and look through your husband's private papers, Mrs. Ducane."

"Haven't I the right to forbid this?" asked Jennifer, and gripped the door-handle tighter.

"I'm afraid not. Under the circumstances I must request you——"

"Isn't command the better word?" retorted Jennifer.

From behind Tempest Dick watched the light in her eyes and her face with approval. He had always known that she had plenty of courage.

"Perhaps so," said Tempest. "But I would like you to remember that I too am the commanded, and not the commander. I am sorry to say that it is quite necessary that I should have access to those papers, Mrs. Ducane."

His manner was courteous as usual; but it was changed. He seemed to speak from the lips only, with his mind drawn back to struggle with some dearly-loved problem which he could not solve. Already Jennifer had faced him for a few official minutes in the Grey Wolf court-room, when she had been formally charged to appear at the Edmonton Sessions as soon as Forsyth had brought the other witnesses down from Chipewyan and formally freed on bail provided by Leigh and Tempest himself. He had been gentle with her then, as he was

gentle now. But the old buoyant sympathy and understanding were gone.

"I—I suppose there would be no use in my applying force to prevent you," she said, struggling to maintain an injured dignity.

A gleam of fun lit Tempest's eyes. She looked so very small and frail.

"I am afraid not. You see I have Corporal Heriot here too."

Jennifer reddened. Then she stood aside from the door with lips set and eyes defiant, and the two men passed her and went in. Where Ducane's reading-lamp burnt on his desk a litter of papers was scattered. Drawers and boxes were open on the floor; ashes smouldered in the fireplace among broken plates from Ducane's camera. Dick said nothing. He had expected it from the first sight of her, but his face was hard with anger. Even now his work came before everything; before Jennifer herself. He crossed to the fire quickly, kicking the ashes apart, and rescuing some half-burnt sheets. But Tempest turned back to Jennifer, and pity and admiration were in his voice.

"You brave little woman," he said. "You brave little woman."

Jennifer's defiance fled before a rush of tears.

"What's the use of it?" she sobbed. "What's the use now! Oh, what will Harry say! What will Harry say!"

"I know what he ought to say." He looked at Slicker. "Won't you take her away and—and—do what you can, Slicker?" he said. "We can't help this, you know. And will you remember, Mrs. Ducane, that the keenest joys and the worst sorrows are those which never come. You may have no need to dread anything at all."

"Come along, honey." Slicker hugged her up against his arm. "Sakes alive, if I'd known what you were after I'd have had you out of there pretty quick. Left you to do his dirty work for him, did he? On my soul, I——"

But Jennifer would allow no comment here. She fought off her tears and dropped down on the rug before the fire in her own sitting-room.

"Put on some more wood, Slicker," she said. "Pine, please; I like the smell. Now, tell me what you have all been doing to Mr. Tempest since I've been away. He looks as if part of him didn't belong to him, somehow."

Slicker followed her lead thankfully. He, too, knew Jennifer's courage.

"It doesn't," he said. "It belongs to Grange's Andree."

Grange's Andree presented herself vaguely to Jennifer's memory as a tall girl with short black curls who had carried

the little dishes of beans and corn on the last occasion when she had supped at Grange's hotel.

"I don't understand," she said. "That girl is—is only——"

"Exactly, honey. Tempest has discovered that she's only about all there is to things. She has done up less high-flown sensitive chaps than Tempest, so you can just guess if she's making hay of him. His work is only the husk to him now. It used to be the core——"

"How did you know all this?"

"How?" Slicker shrugged his shoulders. His ideas concerning love and human nature were increasing in severity. "Because he's a fool. Men like Tempest usually love as they work—over-time. Everybody knows it."

Jennifer winced. She knew enough of Tempest to know that something sacred was being despoiled here. She forgot what was going forward in the next room and turned her rage on Slicker.

"Why don't you try to stop it?" she cried. "How dare you let a thing like that go on, and you in the middle of it? You stupid boy——"

"*Because* I'm a boy I can't stop it. You should do that. He might listen to you. You're a woman."

Jennifer had never felt the fact and its disadvantages and joys more acutely than of late.

"And a boy—or man—naturally expects the woman to do the unpleasant thing," she retorted.

"It wouldn't be unpleasant for you."

"Are you complimenting me on my tact or on the lack of it?"

"Oh, don't be a beast, Jennifer. I've said all I could think of——"

"I guessed you would! If only you'd sometimes try to say the things you couldn't think of it would be much safer. And of course he——"

"Well, he did." Slicker wriggled. "Maybe you could get Heriot to do something. I won't ask him. He's such a jeering, sneering brute——"

"And you'd sooner I was sneered at than you?"

"Oh, come off the roof! What a little cat you are to-night." Slicker slid down beside her on the rug. "See here, honey. This is a serious matter. He's crazy for her. *Crazy* for her. He's letting go of everything. We men are like that sometimes," said Slicker in the wisdom of his twenty-one years. "We will drop through the bottom of all things to get what we want, and we never think how we're going to get out. Tempest is just beginning to realise that he's dropped in. But I don't know if he's reckoned up the shame he'll put on himself and his uniform before he climbs out—if he ever does."

"Mr. Tempest will never shame anything or anybody but those who are wicked enough to accuse him of doing it."

"Sakes," said Slicker admiringly. "What a refreshment you are, honey. Why, you see, there are plenty of fellows ready to sneer at religion and law and all the other things that Tempest used to stand for. Dick Heriot's one. So can't you realise what a peg he's giving them to hang their sneers on? Tempest was—well, he was about the genuine article. Now he's a fool. He forgets most things, and doesn't bother about the rest. He isn't Tempest any more. It's the fault of the life up here, of course. A man sees so few possible women——"

"You brat! How dare you attempt to judge men like him and—and anyone else? You ought to go ea[illegible] again now your lung's healed. I shall write to Uncle Gerald and tell him you spend all your time carrying scandal——"

"By Heavens, Jennifer! You're enough to make a toad spit——"

"Slicker!" Then Jennifer fell into sudden laughter. "Oh, what a dear boy you are. It has done me all the good in the world to get angry with you just now."

"That's all very well." Slicker was not appeased. "But somebody's got to do something about it."

No one was realising this more keenly than Dick in Ducane's study. If Tempest had not been in arrears with the court-case work, occasioning much delay and later complications, Dick would have been over here earlier. He had never suspected this, of course; but his natural instincts led him to desire to guard against all possibilities. Now Jennifer had got her work in first, and the results showed very effectively. For all his anger and disgust and keen disappointment Dick laughed more than once at the holocaust. Her accurate brain had grasped the salient points so thoroughly. There was absolutely nothing left which gave a clue to the real address or composition of the Canada Home-lot Extension Company, although there were papers pertaining to it which were sufficient to show Ducane's connection with it, and also a number of notes in cypher which might contain clues if the key could be found.

On other matters there were papers which verified the scanty revelations discovered already in Robison's shack. The men had certainly been getting in permits under false names; they had been buying land from the breeds at absolutely cut-prices, and they had an infinitely more intimate knowledge of the values and owners of land in the district than any ordinary inhabitant could hope to have. But Jennifer had taken the poker to Ducane's camera-plates, and Tempest looked up over the wreck in some amusement.

"She has left a good deal to the imagination only," he remarked. "Of course one can tell that these two have been playing a crook game for years, and that Ducane was evidently scared off the field on the verge of a commission which Robison stuck to and tried to put through. What scared him, I wonder?"

Dick told of the photograph seen on Jennifer's lap on the steamer.

"He couldn't know that I'd recognise it, of course," he said. "But I suppose he wouldn't take chances. He never had much fancy for that."

"Well," Tempest looked round the room. "She's a brave little woman and I should fancy this would help her. She wouldn't bother to destroy evidence against him if she had already destroyed him—unless she was implicated also."

"That is a legal suggestion only, of course?"

"Of course. No one would suspect her privately. Well; we'd best go back. You can come over to-morrow and do the rest. I'll tell her that we are locking the room. But we might take the cyphers, and—what else?"

He rubbed his hand over his forehead wearily. The end of a long day usually found him weary now. Dick straightened from his stooping position and looked at him. But he was not thinking of the question. He was thinking of the man. There had always been such buoyant courage in Tempest. He was one of those finely-tempered rapiers which will bend hilt to point and swing back to balance again with such a resonant note of strength and verve. But the resilience seemed gone from the steel now. Some unseen furnace had taken the nature out of it for the time and whether it would ever come back Dick did not know any more than he could understand what had taken it. But he knew that he must find out, and to-night too. He felt a sharp stab of pain in that he had forgotten Tempest and all that he meant to do for him, and he felt a warmer glow of love than ever before as Tempest turned away, forgetting his question, and began to pack the papers together.

Those feelings held with him through the drive back to Grey Wolf; and when Tempest locked the papers in the safe and turned to put the lamp out Dick checked him.

"Can you give me a minute?" he asked. "I want to speak to you."

"Will to-morrow do? I am very tired to-night, Dick."

Dick bit his lip. The cynicism in his nature was wide-awake, and he doubted if he could speak to Tempest without conveying his contempt for a man who could let go of all the essentials for the sake of love. And yet pity was strong in him too, and pride. He was so proud of Tempest, and it stung him to the quick that Tempest should be willing to lower

his standard of life as he unquestionably was doing. Some unlocated words flashed to his mind suddenly.

"When the will has forgotten the lifelong aim,
And the mind can only disgrace its fame,
And a man is uncertain of his own name . . ."

The mercilessness of the thought jarred all the love alive in Dick. Such things might be for men spent with toil and years; but for Tempest in full strength and vigour the thing was brutal, unreal, hideous. And yet it seemed very surely true. Tempest turned to the door.

"Put out the light when you go," he said. And then Dick went after him, and laid a hand on his arm.

"You must tell me what's wrong, old man," he said. "Don't you owe me this?"

"There is nothing wrong." Tempest straightened with his face hardening.

"Are you going to marry her, Neil?"

He had not used that name in many years; and his voice went tender with the sound of it. But Tempest drew back; startled, and sternly indignant.

"How did you know what no one has been told?" he asked.

"No one? My dear fellow, you can't surely be as blind as that? Don't you know that there are bets about it from the Landing up to Chipewyan, and probably much further? Everyone knows it. We live in the glare of the footlights along these rivers, as I have found out, I assure you."

Tempest leaned against the door, and his face was drawn and horror-struck. All the finer dreamy reserve of his nature was shocked; outraged; thrown down off its balance for the time.

"They are not talking about her," he said. "Not about her?"

It seemed to Dick as though that passionate, vibrating voice would ward off criticism from Andree by the mere force of it. But he had to answer.

"About you both. Do you mean to marry her, Tempest?"

"Marry her! God knows I'd have married her long ago if she would have had me! But she's so shy—so delicate and hesitating and shy. I can scarcely get her to talk to me at all. I feel such a rough, clumsy brute beside her."

He broke off, walking across the room hastily. He twitched at the blind as though he had gone to straighten it, and Dick watched him with that dark contemplation shutting down over his face. This was worse than he had expected. Much worse. Tempest was the kind of man who saw the shining of high stars and the blooming of white flowers wherever he

looked. Grange's Andree—Dick knew as much as most people did of Grange's Andree. He had seen her playing cards in the back-parlour; jealous and grasping and ready to cheat with the worst of them. He had seen her drinking with Robison and others in the bar; setting her lips to the glass where theirs had been. He had seen men pass her by with a careless jest and a kiss; he had done it many times himself, for the firm, olive cheek was soft and satin-smooth. He had seen—then he looked again at the still figure in the window.

"I have no right to interfere," he said. "But you can hardly be giving full consideration to the facts of the case. Heavens above! Don't you *know* what we all think of her?"

Tempest turned and his eyes showed fire.

"I know how men like you can misjudge her. You can't see that she is innocent—ignorant; just a wild thing of the woods. She doesn't know that she needs protection. But I know, and I can't rest—I can't rest—I want to give it to her——"

He stopped again, turning back to the window.

"I could hate you all for the way you behave to a child like that," he said.

Dick shrugged his shoulders. He saw too far to be able to see as high as Tempest saw.

"If she objected to us why doesn't she avail herself of your offered protection?" he asked dryly. "Can't you answer that? Grange's Andree wasn't made for the domestic proprieties, and you would do well to realise it and pull out of this business at once."

"You were perfectly correct when you said just now that you had no right to interfere. We will leave it at that, please. Good-night."

Dick went to bed. But before he slept he came to a determination.

"When I get back from Edmonton I'll put an end to this," he said.

It had seldom been Dick's habit to halt on the road once he had made his mind up to travel it. But an episode two nights later hastened matters for him irremediably. He came out of the big bar-room at Grange's, shutting the inner door on the smell of smoke and drink and the talk of a handful of settlers "going in" to the Grande Prairie district; stumbled down the back passage and thrust open the door of the room which had been Ducane's private sanctum and way out into the little alley behind the English church. He had been on canoe-patrol all day and his moccasins shod him with silence, so that the two on the far side of the room where the pale light from the window fell did not hear him or heed. But to the

man in the dark of the door that poor, grey light gave a picture so cruelly clear that it took his breath.

In Ducane's big padded chair sat Grange's Andree; and Tempest was on his knee at her side, gripping both her hands and speaking low and thickly. Tempest's head and shoulders were blocked out in a vague smudge; but the light was sharp across the girl's face, showing the wild, half-terrified irritation of a young horse resisting the bit and yet lacking the courage to break free. Tempest did not see. His head was bowed and he was praying to Andree as a man might pray for his life. Dick closed the door softly and got himself out into the dark narrow alley where the wooden church wall rose against the golden afterglow. Crickets were chirping and crows were calling harshly. From the hotel stables came the champ of feeding horses and the occasional bang as they kicked the wall in endeavour to dislodge the flies. Someone came unseen down the noisy sidewalk, whistling shrilly. Dick heard all the sounds. But they seemed far off. Nothing was near but the ugly rock on which a good man was splitting his life.

"Tempest," he said in his throat. "Good God! *Tempest!*"

He told himself that he had known it before. But he knew with an artist's instinct that he had not known until he saw Andree's face. There was no heart behind that face; no understanding. Tempest meant no more to her than Robison or O'Hara had done. Perhaps not so much. And she meant to Tempest—Dick thrust himself through a gap in the rail-fence, and felt the dried grass of the churchyard beneath his feet. The door was open, and the light went in, glorious and golden, to dazzle on the small brass cross above the altar. Dick remembered a tall black cross standing bare on a hill on the trail to Lower Landing. Russian emigrants had worshipped there before they built a church to house their prayers in, but to Dick the Man whom these two crosses represented meant nothing, although the man who was likely soon to be broken on the cross of his own passion meant very much indeed.

The day was nearly done. The wind was full of rich scents from yellow-daisy blooms and clover and silver reeds in the river; from grass on the low warm hills and damp moss in the muskeg, and from thick, loamy earth in the forest. Clear notes of birds fluted across the river, and the sunset lights were flushing in warm opal on the sky. As Dick reached the barrack-gate, slowly, and with his head low, he was stopped by Parrett, the Dissenting minister.

Parrett had been in Grey Wolf nearly a year, and he had learnt much, though not so much as he would have done if Grey Wolf had had more time to give to his education.

"I hear that Robison doesn't go down to Fort Saskatchewan till to-morrow," he said. "S'pose I can come right in and see him, Corporal?"

Dick never considered his title an insult on any lips but Parrett's.

"Don't you think you are a trifle premature?" he suggested. "The man is not condemned yet."

"Why—why—it's not necessary to wait for that."

"But I think I would, really. Robison might feel it rather a personal matter. And, in any case, is it worth training your guns on him? They will turn him off in Fort Saskatchewan where they keep the whole plant, parson and all."

Parrett's outraged earnestness found voluble expression, even under those idle, amused eyes. He was breathless before he ended heatedly:

"And you will receive your punishment for this—this blasphemy, as I told you before."

"Six times," agreed Dick. "Be easy. I am receiving a portion now in my inability to fully appreciate the most pointed sermon I have heard for many years. Robison may prove a better listener. But don't give him anything harder than a tract. His manners are often unexpected. And he is a good shot."

He leaned over the gate after Parrett had gone, listening to the high, joyous voices of two little girls skipping on the river-bank, and thinking of Jennifer. He was dreading this trial for her as he had never dreaded anything for himself, but he did not go to see her as the days dragged by. Carefully, with his clear mind taking due note of all side-issues, he was building up his own evidence on the lines of assistance to Jennifer at any cost. Robison was his chief fear. Nothing could touch the man now, and if he chose to assert that he, with Jennifer's connivance, had murdered Ducane, he could leave these two whom he hated a heritage which would go near to crushing them. If it happened that Robison went into the witness-box before himself he would know better what to do. But he had to prepare for the adverse contingency, and he did not dare leave anything to chance. He knew now that nothing would make Jennifer speak, and that fact caused him a strange pride. She was fit mate for the undeniable courage in himself, and not for the cowardice of Ducane.

Of course it was possible that Forsyth might bring Ducane with him. But Dick did not expect it. Without doubt Robison had bribed or bullied the Quatre Fourches Indians into silence, and Dick had sufficient experience of Indian witnesses to know what happened when they did not want to speak. Dick's daily work was trying just now, for the guarding of prisoners usually fell to his lot. But the two

stupid Germans and the lunatic who had gone insane from loneliness did to the last inch the work detailed for them to do. They whip-sawed timber for a shack to be built on the adjoining lot. They cleaned stables and re-shingled an outhouse and dug post-holes and stretched a wire-fence along them. There were days when the lunatic desired only to walk through the head of Dick's shadow as it moved over the dusty grass, and Dick had to let him do it; there were days when the bullying wind or the rain, or, worst of all, smoke from the forest-fires which blanketed the hills above Grey Wolf, made work a torment. But time drew by at last. Forsyth came down with his witnesses; Jennifer went to Edmonton with Slicker and Mrs. Leigh, and, by Tempest's arrangement, Andree had gone with them. Dick did not speak to Tempest of Andree now, though he had been more than uneasy over a certain matter which occurred on the night when Andree realised that Robison was taken to Fort Saskatchewan for a trial which would mean death. Dick had gone through the back-passage at Grange's that night and had suddenly confronted Moosta. To all appearances Moosta had just come through a storm which had fallen on her apart from her will. She clutched Dick with fat, strong hands, and all her respect for him could not straighten her English.

"Dieu! She mak' hit!" she gasped. "Hit Rosario. An' moi. An' she cry. An' cry. *An'* mak' noise—diable noise."

"Who?" demanded Dick, halting.

"S'pose it Andree," said Moosta. "She got devil, me t'ink."

Dick pushed open the door of the back-parlour and walked in. He had never been there before, and its mustiness and smell of smoke and cooking and its low, roughly-beamed ceiling made all dark for the moment. Then he saw Andree on the floor behind Grange's big chair, with her head wound in a tablecloth and wild turmoil about her. Dick pulled the cloth away, and stooped to her. That always suspicious mind of his was interested.

"What's all this, Andree?" he asked. "You have scared Moosta's hair out of its pins."

Andree's eyes met his; soft, wild, and anguish-stricken as the eyes of a wounded doe. Dick had never realised her beauty so keenly before. He stooped lower.

"Will—he be—kill?" she whispered.

"Undoubtedly. I think he wants to be killed, Andree. Do you know why?"

The tears darkened her eyes. She put up her long, slender hands, framing Dick's face in them.

"What matter—if he want it *so*?" she asked.

"What matter indeed. Not worth crying over, is it, Andree? But why does he want it *so*?"

"Bien," she said. "He want to love me too much. It is better—quite better for him an' Ogilvie. Cela est fort bien. I do not want them to love me. Tapwa, Dick; they do deserve it." Her soft fingers tapped gently against his temples. "They do deserve it," she said, and there was no feeling in her voice.

Dick drew his breath in, looking at her.

"Whether they deserve it or not I think most men will get it in one way or another if they love you, Grange's Andree," he said. "Why were you crying, then?"

"I—was frightened," she said. And then she sprang up, laughing and brilliant again.

"I go to put the hair of Moosta in its pins some more," she said. "One pin will do—if so it is in the right place."

Dick had gone away, but he was not satisfied. If Robison chose to die undefended that was the man's own business. But the matter would have been clearer if Robison had made a legitimate fight for his life.

But if Dick dreaded those Edmonton days for Jennifer, Tempest dreaded still more the knowledge that there they would make Andree swear away a man's life. He tortured himself over the matter, bitterly angry with Dick because of his share in it; illogical, anxious, wearied out by stress of work and of thought. Everything which was said and done seemed to rasp and hurt the delicate edges of his nature, and Dick, coming into the office on the last evening where Tempest was making up his end of the month reports, understood that he would have to take this thing in hand very shortly, or it would be too late; if, indeed, it were not too late now.

Tempest looked up and handed a paper over the desk.

"I have duplicated this voucher three times," he said. "Can you make the other three to-night?"

Dick was on night-watch from seven p.m. until midnight. He nodded, folding the sheet into his pocket-book.

"If this goes on we'll have to get a hand-press," he said. "There has been a lunatic of sorts in cells ever since I came, and that means sixfold vouchers each time."

"Oh, well; all in the day's work, I suppose." Tempest pushed his hair back. "Is everything ready for an early start in the morning?"

"I think so. Tempest, you're letting all this get hold of you too much, you know."

Tempest turned back to his blotting-pad impatiently.

"At least you keep the balance even," he said.

But when Dick had gone out he dropped his pen and sat

still, with a fear which had lately come to life dawning in his eyes. Dimly he was beginning to know that he was deceiving himself; that he was deliberately building up and holding to a thing which had not, and never could have, any foundation. He fought against this knowledge with all his powers; telling himself that it was the right of man to seek a woman, to give to her love and protection and help, to enable her to fulfil her life gloriously and wisely and fully. This was man's right: one of the primal laws. Therefore, if he chose to give so to Andree where was the sin? A thousand times he told himself that there was no sin. The very height and fineness of his nature made it possible for him to deceive himself. He had given his all to the work. Now he was giving his all to the woman. Surely these were the two things which Nature and God required of him? But the fact that he had to assure himself of this so often suggested the flaw in it. He knew well that he was wrecking his powers and crippling his work; he knew that his unhappiness was due to more than Andree's indifference. And in the centre of his heart he knew that the truth was waiting, if he would look at it. He had lived too near that truth all his life not to know it. But he would not look. He was afraid of what it might tell him; and so he lived with his inner heart shut against himself, and he suffered accordingly.

Dick could do wrong if he wanted to; open-eyed, and in half-derision at himself. Tempest could only do it by blinding his conscience. Part of him guessed that he was doing this. Part of him clung to that early image of Andree; of the ideal woman and the ideal life; clung fiercely, with all the steel-spring tenacity of his nature. He could not let her go, and he would not, until she was taken irrevocably from him.

But when the moment which he had feared came, four days later, and he saw Andree walk into the witness-box and take the oath, all his strength went out of him, and he hid his eyes under his hand. Dick, sitting in the front seat among the witnesses, watched, with that silent intensity which had gained him his Indian name of Carcajou. He saw Robison in the dock raise his head and look once at Andree with that expression which Dick had seen in the cell at Chipewyan. There was renunciation in it; there was adoration; self-abnegation. There was something which lifted him for the instant to a plane where Dick had never trodden yet. Then it was gone, and the thick, heavy face and brutal eyes and forehead showed reddened and swarthy in the airless heat of the filled court-room. Dick's suspicions strengthened. Could it possibly be Andree who was playing Robison into the hands of death? Was there any means by which Robison could save himself

if he chose? Was Andree herself the sinner, and did Robison know it?

Dick would have been glad to believe this or anything else which could part her from Tempest. But he could not believe it. He could not have done such a thing himself. Had Jennifer stood there, lying away his liberty with the half-coquettish innocence Andree used he would have had her life for it though he took his own directly after. And that breed, coarse and dark and soulless as a lump of moose-meat, could assuredly never be so far swayed by the epic passion of love, no matter how far the passions of hate might move him.

One by one the questions went on, almost as a matter of form.

"You say that you ran away while the murder was taking place. Were you running into Grey Wolf for help?"

A flash of Andree's coquetry had just sought and found the admiring eyes of a young lawyer's clerk. She started; half-laughed, and hesitated.

"I—I suppose," she said.

"Why did you not tell Corporal Heriot when you saw him?"

"I do not like him sufficient," said Andree sedately, with her chin up. A laugh went round, and Andree thrilled to it. Dick saw the glow on her face, and the consciousness in her actions, and he smiled. It was so exactly the vain, irresponsible nature which he had always ascribed to her. Surely it would disgust Tempest? But Tempest sat still with his head in his hand, and he did not move as Andree's simple evidence went through to the end. She did not quite understand why they had quarrelled. It was all si vite—si sauvage. Robison did pull out Ogilvie's knife. Oui, she saw that. Oui, she saw him strike, and then she did run.

Dick's evidence established a little more, although it was scarcely needed; for Robison pleaded guilty without extenuating circumstances, receiving his sentence with stolid indifference. A man behind Dick leaned forward.

"That fellow has an iron will," he said. "Or is it just brutal stupidity?"

"It is will, I think," said Dick, and shuddered a little to think what that will might do to Jennifer before long. And then he went out to get through as best he might the hours before he would see Jennifer in that dock.

Yesterday Tempest had driven Jennifer through the town and along the tall banks of the Saskatchewan River, assuring her that she had nothing to fear, and that this absurd charge must fall to pieces on the least investigation. And Jennifer did not mean to fear. But when she stood with her bare hands on the edge of the dock, and saw the white wigs bobbing below her, and the stand of the jury opposite, and the judge

in his scarlet robes, her strong courage failed for a moment. Tempest and Dick and Slicker were all there. But they could not help. It was one of those crucial moments when the soul must stand alone. Then, as the oath was administered to the first witness, she straightened, and stood still.

Emmett, captain of the tug, was the first witness ; a small, mean-looking man, terribly afraid of being personally implicated. He told how he had put Ducane, Robison, and Jennifer ashore at Quatre Fourches Channel, and how they had been taken up the stream by Indians. In about four hours Jennifer and Robison had come back, and inquiries for Ducane were met with the assertion that he would return with the Indians. Emmett had thought no more of the matter until Constable Hinds arrested Robison on the arrival of the tug at Chipewyan and asked concerning Ducane. Robison said that Ducane was coming back later. Emmett could not remember that Jennifer had said anything, either of denial or assent. Next morning Hinds went across to the Channel. But the Indians were gone, and it was only the cache in the bank which gave the first suggestion of foul play. Hinds could not follow the Indians up, for there was no one else at the Post.

Being asked where the other police were he told how Dick had taken Forsyth to Lobstick Island, and how it was rumoured that he had done so because he knew what Robison and Ducane intended to do. Cross-examined, he spoke of the well-known fact that Ducane was brutal to his wife and that Dick, Robison, and Slicker were almost the only visitors to the house across the Lake. Slicker was called to corroborate this, and in the hands of the direct ruddy-faced counsel for the prosecution he was forced to admit Dick's friendship with Jennifer, his dislike of Ducane, and Ducane's scarcely-concealed hatred and fear of Dick. He admitted that Jennifer felt her position as Ducane's wife very keenly, and that once, in a flash of temper, she had said that she hoped she would never be tempted to strike him. Under cross-examination he said that Jennifer had gone to Chipewyan against her wish, and at Ducane's expressed command. Her counsel asked :

" He was in the habit of making her do what she did not want, then ? "

" I don't know. She seldom spoke of her own feelings. She was very good to him, and very patient with him always."

" Was she friendly with the breed, Robison ? "

" No. She couldn't bear him. She never spoke to him if she could help it."

" You do not think she would connive with him against her husband ? "

" Never. And I know that Ducane is alive. Otherwise his wife would tell what had happened," said Slicker.

The counsel for the prosecution rose again.

"If Ducane has escaped is it not almost certain that he has done it with the joint aid of Mrs. Ducane and Robison?"

"I don't know."

"The three were together. The remaining two must know what occurred. Therefore, Mrs. Ducane and Robison have acted in conjunction, whether the issue be escape or murder."

Slicker went down, desperate and anxious, to see Tempest grapple with the problem where he had left it. Tempest was asked if it would not be to Robison's interest to shield Jennifer until he himself had the chance to extract from Ducane's study all such evidence as might be damning to his own liberty.

"Possibly. That matter would not affect him once he was caught."

"He is known to hate the police. Might he not keep silence to baffle them?"

"His hate is focussed on Corporal Heriot. To acouse him of connivance would, in these circumstances, be better than silence."

"He knows that connivance has already been suggested. Mrs. Ducane and Corporal Heriot were seen in a canoe on the Lake just before Heriot went up to Lobstick Island."

"Corporal Heriot has been working up a case of fraud against Ducane and the breed Robison for some months. He was not likely to do anything which would thwart his plans there."

"Personal reasons have been suggested as a reason for that."

"I believe them to be totally untrue."

Cross-examined he told how Jennifer had burnt the evidence which might have enabled Dick to prove his case, and of Dick's anger and disappointment on discovering this. He spoke of Jennifer's unswerving loyalty in word and deed to her husband, and suggested that it had proved itself by the fact that she dared something in destroying his papers by his order.

"You believe that it was done at his order?"

"Certainly. When I stopped the work half done, she said, 'What is the use of it now? Oh, what will Harry say?'"

The counsel for the prosecution suggested that Jennifer was personally implicated.

"It is well known that she did not love her husband and that she had reason to fear him. Even supposing that he forced her into helping him to escape, is it likely that she would make away with evidence which, in the event of his recapture, would save her from his persecutions?"

"She never forgot the duty she owed him as her husband," said Tempest.

A few more leading questions were quietly parried, and then Tempest gave place to Hinds, who told of the search in Quatre Fourches; the finding of the cache and the impossibility of extracting information from either Jennifer or Robison. He had not been able to follow up the Indians; but Forsyth had done so later, and three of them were now in court. They were called; but either they were ignorant of the affair or Robison's threats had been effectual. They had left the two white men and the white woman on shore up the Channel, and, after taking a few photographs, the three had gone into the woods. Some hours later Mr. Ducane had returned with Robison who told them that Ducane was following in another canoe. They never saw anything of that canoe, and on their return to their people they neither heard nor saw anything of a white man. They did not know any more.

Forsyth was next called. His evidence asserted that Dick had come to Chipewyan ostensibly to arrest Robison for murder, but that he had refused to do so at once on the ground that he wished to implicate Ducane on another matter first. He could not say that Dick had any other motive in leaving the man at liberty. He could not say that Dick had any but the alleged reason for taking himself to Lobstick Island. He did not see why the Indians should deny the fact if a white man had passed up the Channel, and he thought it very possible that Ducane could have been killed and sunk in the Channel or buried in the swampy land round about without being found. He acknowledged that he had had men dragging the Channel ever since; but it was muddy and full of snags. Under cross-examination he had no reason to say that he suspected Dick of collusion. Dick had promised to get evidence from Mrs. Ducane, and had afterwards refused to give it. Dick had insisted on taking Mrs. Ducane back with him in order that she might supply information regarding the Company for which Ducane was supposed to be working. He had not heard that she had given any.

His evidence closed the day's inquiry; and Dick, who had never left the court, except to snatch a hasty lunch while Jennifer was away, caught Tempest's arm at the door.

"I must keep off," he said. "But go round to see her, Tempest. Tell her that it's going all right. And don't let anyone suggest Robison to her. Slicker, I want you."

Slicker turned wretched blue eyes on him.

"If she is condemned it's my doing," he said.

"Don't you flatter yourself. Twenty of you couldn't condemn her. This is only the beginning of the thing. My dear fellow, you wait until we get through."

He was kinder than Slicker had ever known him; and he insisted on the boy dining with him, and staying with him until

Leigh came round and took him for a walk. And after that Dick went through his own evidence again, examining it in the light of to-day's showing, and readjusting wherever it seemed necessary. He was too busy to be anxious; too grimly set on his work to think of Jennifer.

The next morning dragged through with unimportant evidence: the breed who had seen Dick and Jennifer go out in the canoe; Grey Wolf residents who spoke of the state of affairs in Ducane's house; those who knew Dick and could say little good of him; those who knew Jennifer and could say little ill. After the lunch-hour Robison's name was called, and Dick said "Thank God," not because he believed in a God, but because there is no other form of relieved expression. But Robison was not available. There had been delay in bringing him from Fort Saskatchewan prison, and Dick was presently put in the witness-box in his stead. He felt a moment's tremor as he took the oath. For he meant to clear Jennifer if it were possible; but he knew that it would be at heavy cost to himself. Tempest, looking at him, remembered his Indian name of Carcajou and sighed a little. Dick was very quiet, and his eyes were half-closed; but Tempest knew how he could flash out when it came to fight. Some unimportant questions opened the way for the leading one:

"Why did you take Sergeant Forsyth up to Lobstick Island immediately after having been out in the canoe with Mrs. Ducane?"

"Because she told me I would find her husband and Robison there."

"It is alleged that you went for another reason."

"Well, as it happens, I did. I made Sergeant Forsyth sea-sick."

The counsel reddened as a smothered laugh ran through the court.

"The captain of the tug has accused Mrs. Ducane of sending you and Forsyth there to clear the way for the murder of Ducane."

"He would," said Dick composedly.

"What do you mean by that?"

"To accuse everyone interested is the surest way to save himself from suspicion. But I haven't heard yet that he accused Ducane."

"Do you mean that Ducane may have committed suicide?"

"Certainly not. I do not think that Ducane is dead."

"What reason do you give for that opinion?"

"Sergeant Forsyth has had parties searching the woods and Captain Emmett has had men dragging the Channel almost ever since Ducane disappeared. I cannot believe that they would not find him, supposing he was there—if they wished to."

"What do you mean by 'if they wished to'?"

"Captain Emmett might not care to acknowledge publicly that through personal fear he had subjected a woman to a thing of this sort."

Away in the back seat Grange was rubbing his hands and grinning.

"My, my," he said. "Don't get much change out o' the Corp'ral, does they? I guess that's hit Emmett where he lives all right."

"I do not like to look at Dick," said Andree underbreath. "He has the eyes—it is like one animal caught in a trap."

"Why—I thought he was looking pretty gay, myself."

"Ah! Bête!" said Andree, and turned from him with a shrug.

The question Dick had prepared for came next.

"On what terms were you with Mrs. Ducane which could make it possible for you to think she would send you to arrest her husband?"

"I got a very great deal of information concerning Ducane's fraudulence from his wife—without her knowledge, of course. I obtained it principally at her own house where I visited very often."

"You mean that you went to a man's house and ate his bread and used his friendship as a cloak to extract damning information about him from his wife?"

"Certainly. I had to have the information."

"But you could not have gained the knowledge that sent you to Lobstick in this way? Please explain the matter fully."

"It has been said that Mrs. Ducane and I acted in collusion in the fact of Ducane's disappearance. That is so far from being the case that she deliberately gave me misinformation in order to prevent his capture. I was under the impression that she was telling the truth. I knew that she had a great deal to bear from Ducane, and I was—I imagined that she had taken me into her co. fidence for the first time. It was not until I got to Lobstick Island that I realised how fully she had tricked me."

"If she had never given you her confidence before, why should you have expected and believed it on such an important point then? Was it not more likely that you should be suspicious of her desire to betray her husband?"

Dick looked across at Jennifer, and he hesitated a moment.

"Through all our friendship Mrs. Ducane has kept me at arm's length. She relented somewhat that night, and—she allowed me to put my own interpretation on what she said. She did it to save her husband, as I have since had very conclusive reason to understand. For Mrs. Ducane knows where Ducane is, and she knows that it means very much to me to

find him. But I can get no information from her at all. She has fooled me, and shown me where I stand in her estimation."

His voice was stern, almost sad. But it carried the ring of truth.

"Is it not most likely that she has killed him or had him killed? In that case she would, of course, be reticent on the matter."

"Robison would not kill him. Nor would he shelter Mrs. Ducane if she had done it. Ducane was too useful to Robison. He wanted money and power, and I can prove that Ducane was the channel through which he was getting them. He had not sufficient education to get them otherwise, but he had sufficient wit not to destroy the source. In my opinion Ducane disappeared because his fear of me was greater than Robison's power over him, and he made Mrs. Ducane burn the implicating papers in order that, when he was found or came back, he might purchase immunity by betraying the Company for himself."

"Is it not possible that Mrs. Ducane believed that she was telling you the truth when she sent you to Lobstick?"

"No. Her actions since have convinced me of that."

"In what way?"

Dick was fighting for Jennifer's liberty and he did not hesitate.

"I have several times tried to persuade her to leave Ducane or to divorce him, and she has always repulsed me. Her mind is centred on him, and she is waiting for him to come back. I believe that he is living, and I have more reason to wish to doubt that than you can have."

Tempest was watching him with bitten lips. Dick was getting the sympathy for Jennifer, certainly. But at what a cost! It could not be possible that he was laying his inmost heart bare here in the court. He must be lying; but he surely felt the position in which he was putting himself. And then Tempest remembered, painfully. This Dick had no scruples of shame nor honour, and he would have no objections to telling lies, even on oath.

To Dick himself the psychology of the matter was interesting. He was telling the absolute truth, which was unusual, and it was doing more good than any carefully-shaped lies could have done. He had turned Jennifer into the persecuted and blameless wife, and himself and Ducane into the sinners, and the results of this arrangement would show very soon. But, because the postulated reason for Jennifer's alleged destruction of Ducane lay in her relations with Dick, he was kept in the witness-box for the remainder of the afternoon; and how much he had won he did not know until Robison should take his place there, and how much harm he had done

himself with her he did not know either. But no cross-examining could extract from him more than he wished to say, and he gave place to Robison at last in the knowledge that Jennifer's cause was safe unless Robison chose to damn it. But Robison chose to say nothing. Called to a higher tribunal he was indifferent to the threats of an earthly one. He would not tell the truth, but he would not lie either, and Dick saw him go with something nearer gratitude to an unknown God than he had thought possible.

The long days in the hot, close court-room made Jennifer's little pale face smaller and paler than ever. But her courage had not flagged, and she had not misunderstood Dick's evidence. Much that he had said seemed painful and unnecessary to her; but she did not doubt his wisdom in saying it, even when she herself stood to be questioned on what he had said. There was nothing to deny there, for Dick had known better than to lie with her frank truth to follow him. But his disclosures had turned the tide of sympathy so powerfully in her favour that it could not be stopped now. Of Emmett's trumped-up charge there was practically nothing left. Jennifer had been shown to have thwarted at all points the man with whom she was supposed to be in love, and not the severest examination could make her story differ in the essentials from Dick's. She gave her answers clearly and directly; but she refused to say more of Ducane but that he was, to the best of her knowledge, alive and well.

"Where would be the use of my helping him get away if I told of him now?" she asked naïvely; and Dick saw more than one of the jury smile.

Her counsel made much of the point that, Ducane being a free agent at the time of his disappearance, Jennifer had committed no crime in assisting him, nor in destroying his papers at his command. She denied most firmly any knowledge concerning Ducane's connection with the Canada Home-lot Extension Company. Ducane had told her to burn all the papers in his escritoire, and she had been doing it hastily when she was interrupted. Many of them mentioned the Company, and she would have no objection to giving the address if she knew it. But she did not remember it, even if she had read it. She was dismissed at last with a verdict of "Not proven," and a heavy fine for contempt of court; and Dick, who had hoped for something better, had venom on his tongue when Tempest went to his room before dinner that night.

"I can't think that Mrs. Ducane was lying, though I thought you were," said Tempest. "*Did* you try to make her love you?"

Dick was dressing after a bath. But he stopped to laugh at Tempest.

"She isn't the first woman, and she won't be the last," he said. "Need you look so solemn over it?"

"I had not thought that you were a scoundrel," said Tempest slowly.

"Oh, well"; Dick shrugged his shoulders. "That little pour passer le temps did her good on the whole. And it didn't hurt me."

"I wonder if anything can hurt you now."

"Not much, I fancy. Not this, anyway. She gave me a run for my money, though."

Tempest went out in disgust, and Dick frowned as he hooked his collar. He had never loved Jennifer better than now, and he had never been so afraid of her. All which she had held sacred he had dragged into the light, making her testify to it as well as himself. She had been asked once if she loved him, and Dick's heart had stopped with fear before the question was waived. For he knew that she would have told the truth. But though fear for her was over now there was much bitterness in him, or he would not have answered Tempest so. He was coming to believe that she would be more difficult to persuade than he had ever expected, and his face was hard with anxiety when he went at last out to the dimly-lighted streets and walked up to Jennifer's hotel.

Slicker opened the door of her private sitting-room when he knocked on it. The strain had told on the boy severely; but anger flamed into his face at the sight of Dick. He would have shut the door if Dick's foot had not been in the way.

"Is she there—alone?" said Dick.

"Yes. But you're not to see her, you cad."

Dick's hand brushed Slicker aside.

"Stay outside," he said only, and went in, shutting the door behind him.

Slicker stood still on the mat with the colour dying from his face. Boy though he yet was in experience and understanding, he felt those charged forces in the man with which he dared not meddle. Then he went away, a little dazed, and with a curious feeling of awe.

The little hotel parlour was as unlike Jennifer's pretty rooms at home as anything could be. But Dick saw nothing but the white-gowned girl in the big chair by the window. She turned her head to watch him cross the room; but neither spoke, and she did not lift the head from where the bare arm propped it on the window-sill. The night was very hot, and her face had no colour at all, though there was a faint smile on her lips as she looked at his scarlet uniform and at the gentle deference which she knew would not hold him long.

"You were right when you said you would hurt me," she said.

"And I was right when I said that would not end it. You understand, or you would not be speaking to me now." He sat on the window-sill with the dark of a closed shop behind him. "Never mind all that now, Jennifer. It is over. What pretty arms you have. I never saw them uncovered before."

She drew them back hurriedly under the falling laces.

"I have not given you the right to call me Jennifer," she said.

"But you will." He paused, then said slowly: "If you are too tired we will leave the matter for to-night. But you cannot imagine that I am going to let it rest."

"I am not too tired. No." She shivered a little. "But it can only hurt us."

"I don't fancy your suggested remedy would ease that. Have you found it so simple to put the thing out of your heart?"

"You know that I have not. But that doesn't alter the question. We are not our own masters here. This has been threshed out for us long ago—through suffering—and passion—and bitter remorse."

Her voice was low, and she looked past him to the sky. In her loose white dress and her aureole of bright hair she seemed almost unearthly, guarded from his dominant eagerness by a strange sacredness which daunted and puzzled him.

"I am not asking you to do wrong," he said. "God forbid. But to divorce the man who has ill-treated you and whom you do not love, and to marry the man who loves you is common-sense only. To refuse to do it is the wrong. Can't you see that?"

"I made no reservations when I married Harry. I cannot make them now. I could not live in the same house with him again, I think. But I must be free to help him if ever he should need help. This is my duty. Not my duty to myself only, nor to you, nor to him. We can't get away from the fact that we belong to the great Brotherhood of Life. Where you or I fail or sin future generations pay for it."

"I don't understand. It is not as if you had children——"

"I didn't mean that. But it has taken such centuries to work out the moral laws, and so we know they must be true. We should hurt ourselves and more than ourselves if we broke them."

"I cannot feel or believe that, Jennifer."

"But I can and do. And because you know this it is for you to help me, not to hinder. It should be the pride of your manhood to make this hard thing easy for us to bear."

"I don't want to make it easy. I want to make it impossible. You are building a fetish out of a chimera, Jennifer. We owe nothing to the past, nor to the future. We owe all to ourselves only. And I am not going to spoil your life and

mine for the sake of a creation of the fancy. This life is all we have, and it is madness not to make the most of it. It is madness to lose a day—an hour——"

He caught her hands, speaking thickly, and his face was lit and warm with eagerness. She met his eyes steadily.

"Does love not mean respect with you?" she asked.

The phrase struck him. He remembered that German boy at Grey Wolf who had desired to "love all ladies always." And he remembered his own rebuke. It was her face had brought it from him then. It was her face brought its memory now. He let her hands go, and stood up.

"I beg your pardon if I have offended you," he said. "But all this is only fencing, you know. You will have to see the thing in a wider light. It is impossible that you should seriously think of condemning us to such an equivocal position——"

Through the dark of the hot room he walked back and forth; he stood still; he came back to the window again: arguing ever with patience, with passion, with flashes of sarcasm or tenderness. His bitter humour got the upper hand at last.

"Your religion is accountable for this, of course. You have run after it until it has turned and rent you as all extremes are certain to do. But in your natural pleasure at self-sacrifice you appear to have forgotten me. I have not offered myself up for demolition, and I can't see what right you have to hand it out to me."

"It isn't religion. It is—conscience."

"The same thing when they become abnormal."

"No. Conscience is—it is God, I suppose. Religion—well, it is tied on to us with our bibs, and we leave it there because it becomes a habit. And with lots of people it is nothing more. God is more than that, you know. He is sought first-hand by those who won't take a go-between. Religion is often just the go-between. And when you sneer at religion that is the thing you mean. I am afraid you don't understand anything about the other—yet."

"I understand that you are the sweetest and truest soul I have ever known." He came back; kneeling a knee on the window-sill and leaning to her. "I will take you for my religion and my conscience and my God if you will. But I won't take any other. I don't want any other. Why should I? If God made this world then He did not make such a pure and beautiful thing that I should want to love and worship Him because of it."

"But don't you see that it is you and unbelievers like you who take the purity and beauty out of it? And then you blame God."

"He should not have allowed the devil to be too strong for us, then."

"It is you who have allowed that——"

"Please don't begin a theological discussion. I am not up in all the cant phrases—I beg your pardon again, but—I wonder if you realise what you are doing with me. We are not children, to be frightened by the bugbears of devils or gods. We are simply man and woman, with our own problems to meet and our own doubts to conquer. It is natural that you should be afraid of this step at first. But no religion, no philosophy, no metaphysics can prove to us that there is a God or another world but this. Our nature is our strongest and most relentless guide. Why shouldn't we follow it? For we have no other."

"We have. Oh, we have." She put her hand on his shoulder. "You can't do it, Dick. If you kill my belief you kill me. It *is* me. I could not live without it—not even with you."

"My God—if you'd only try it," he said. But before her face his eager eyes dropped, and he sat still, biting his lips and frowning at the dark wall beyond the window.

Jennifer twisted her hands together. She knew that he was recognising acutely this hidden force that was ranged against him, and that the whole of his manhood's assertive will was in revolt at it.

"You are wilfully blinding yourself," he said at last. "You don't realise that religion is and always has been the most selfish thing conceivable. You are showing me the brutality and mercilessness of religion now. You have taught me to hate it as I never did before, because it is the thing which separates us. You have shown me the self-centred satisfaction of those who worship it——"

She put out her hands with a sudden cry.

"Go! Oh, go! You are hurting me too much!"

He sprang up and stooped over her.

"I will come back to you," he said. "I shall keep on coming back while I live, and I will wear down your resistance, Jennifer. I will have you, if I die for it—or if I make you die for it. My work will keep me in the West just now, and you will be in the East. But I shall come to you again. I shall come."

He took her hands down from before her eyes.

"Your little gods won't make you happy," he said. "We are men and women on this old earth, Jennifer, and not fantastic spiritual anomalies. You want me, and you will never stop wanting me. You know what I have done to yourself and Ducane, and yet you cannot love me the less. You know that I laugh at all the tenets which you believe, and yet you

cannot love me the less. This proves that love is not a spiritual thing and that it is sheer imbecility to put it on a spiritual plane. You are wrecking both our lives for nothing—nothing!"

"It is often the nothings of earth which grow to the everythings of Heaven," she said.

The white, brave sadness of her face halted the impatient anger on his tongue. He lifted her hands, kissed them, and laid them back on her lap.

"I have lived enough to know that we all blind ourselves, and that no man has the right to judge his fellow," he said. "You believe that you are right, you poor little girl, and you are going to make us both suffer for your belief. I believe that you are wrong, and I'll convince you of it yet. A man takes his stand on reason and a woman on sentiment. If I give way on some points you must do the same. And I will not say good-bye to you, for I mean to come back."

She watched him cross to the door and turn to look at her. And she raised herself in the big chair.

"Good-bye," she said. But he shook his head with a sudden, half-whimsical smile, and shut the door behind him.

CHAPTER X.

"THE FORCE ISN'T A NURSERY."

THE mystery of the people of the world; the strangeness of the many lives about him had always consoled Dick in other days for the troubles that fell on him. It was his nature to keep himself busy, bodily and mentally; and when he came back to the old daily routine at Grey Wolf and passed the empty house across the Lake in his patrols he found the value of the work-habit which he had taught himself. Work was the only leash which could hold his temper just now, and he needed all that life could give him. Day and night the district saw him prowling through it; stalking faint trails of wrong-doers, examining into the state of roads and crops and bridges, hearing petty details of complaint and squabble in that alert silence which promised swift redress, and exercising prisoners with a bland mercilessness which made men fear to come under the harrow of his power.

Tempest went his own way these days. Since Dick's rebuke to him the old friendship seemed to have slid off the two, and each man walked his daily round, king in his own right of jurisdiction, and neither giving nor asking sympathy or understanding. Trouble dulled Tempest's energies; it quickened Dick's. And no love of woman nor of himself could blur the sharp edge of his calculating mind. Before he went to Edmonton he had discovered that flattery, gross, daring flattery was the simplest way in which to manage Grange's Andree. To the heat of it she would open the doors of her heart while Tempest's gentle and reverent prayers only irritated or amused her.

Dick's clear mind had grasped this salient fact fully, and with Jennifer's face sweet and grave-eyed in his mind, he began to make private sketches and bold outlines of Andree; planning his attack with restless eagerness, and bringing at last to Moosta a strongly-finished girl-head that was Grange's Andree glowing in her young wild beauty.

Moosta was in the back passage with her arms full of babies when Dick presented it to her, holding it away from chubby fingers and reaching mouths and finally taking it into the back parlour and pinning it on the wall between a garish oleograph

of the Madonna and a little guttering lamp on the bracket below. Moosta demurred, being a devout Roman Catholic just now, with five children going to the Mission School. But Dick went away and left it there, smiling in its rounded contours and deep warm colours below the stiff, flat-faced Madonna.

Andree snatched the lamp up when she saw it, and looked at it long and very close. Then she whipped round on Moosta with parted lips that drew quick breaths, and eyes that made the lamplight pale.

"Dieu!" she cried. "That—that not *me*!"

Moosta looked up with her mouth full of silk threads. She was embroidering a mooseskin moccasin-front with exquisite neatness.

"Tanse?" she said. "Aha. C'est vous." And then she dropped her work. "Eh!" she cried. "He is ver' bon, cet pickshure, mais vous êtes mechatwow plus bonne."

Andree's colour ran up the smooth, glowing skin to the dark curls that made blue shadows about her temples. She turned to the painting again.

"He do that!" she said, quick and low. "Ah—c'est vrai. He make me like so!"

She had often seen herself as the distorted common mirrors of the houses she knew showed her to her own girl's eyes. She had not before seen herself as a man saw her, and that man the man of all others who had piqued her by his careless indifference, and roused her hate by his strength, and her interest by the stories men told of him. This was a triumph, a dizzy burning triumph; an unbelievable surprise. She pulled the painting down; breathing into it; sending the light of her eyes to meet those painted ones, the laugh on her lips to those red lips curved by a cunning hand. For the first time in the bald, raw life she had lived she saw absolute human beauty; vital, wonderful, elusive. And that beauty was her own. She flung the sketch aside and hurled herself on her knees before Moosta.

"Look!" she cried. "Look on me. Omisse—with the straight eyes. Am I *so*? Ah—est-il that je suis ce belle? Moosta! Dites-moi! Vous êtes tapwa mynatun; mais moi—I am *so!* Ah! Tell me!"

She shook the placid fat Moosta until the silk threads were half-swallowed, and Moosta gasped:

"Wah! Wah! Andree! Feenish! Vous mak' keel. Eh? Aha; him say vous mooch plus preety."

"Nemoweya! Ah, say that again, Moosta, and I'll love you kakeka mena kakeka."

"Vhy you s'prise?" Moosta rubbed her wide, flat nose. "Wee all mak' see vous laike dat—tous les jours."

Andree sprang up; swaying, glowing, glorious. She was drunk with joy in her own beauty.

"I did not know. I——" She stopped suddenly with her deep eyes turned sideways like a listening animal and her breast heaving quickly. Grange was speaking in the passage, and both women knew the voice with a laugh in it which answered.

"Ah!" Andree whipped the moccasin from Moosta's astonished hands, and sat herself down to work demurely.

"Dans les prisons des Nantes,
Dans les prisons des Nantes . . "

she sang, sweet and low, setting careful scarlet stitches into a growing bud on the deer-skin.

Grange giggled as he pushed the door wide.

"Here's the Corp'ril come along fur a game o' cards," he said. "You take a hand, Andree? You sure will?"

Andree broke her song one half-moment, but she did not raise her eyes.

"Too busy," she said sedately.

"But——" began Moosta, finding her voice in her dismay, and then Andree's voice carolled out, high and clear.

"Lui y a-tun prisonnier, gai,
Faluron, falurette, faluron, falurette."

Dick's voice came in with hers on the last line:

"Faluron, falurette, dondé."

He crossed the room, noting the painting on the table and the colour that climbed to Andree's hair.

"That's pretty," he said, indicating the bud under the slim brown fingers. "He'll be a lucky man who gets those, Andree."

Moosta's English always failed her before these men of the red coats and the direct eyes. She plunged at incoherent explanation; ended in a squeak of Cree despair, and then obeyed Grange's order to bring glasses and a bottle. Grange was proud through every honest inch of him at Dick's presence for the first time in the back-parlour, and he was content to smoke in silence, until his guest chose to remember him again.

"Won't you tell me who they're for, Andree?" said Dick.

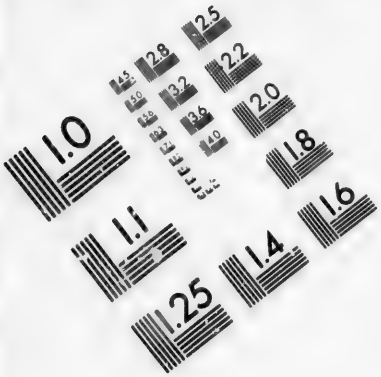
Andree looked up; saw his eyes; saw the painting on the table, and flung restraint off in a breath.

"Ah!" she cried. "Say it! Is that like—me?"

"No. You are lovelier than that, Andree. Much lovelier."

"So-o—" It was long-drawn wonder and delight. She looked at him. "When men did call me pretty I did not know it was all that pretty," she said.

Dick bit the smile off on his lips.



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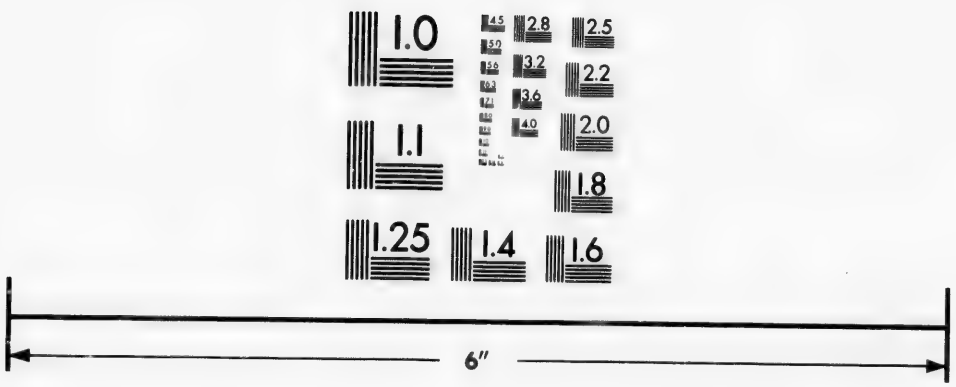

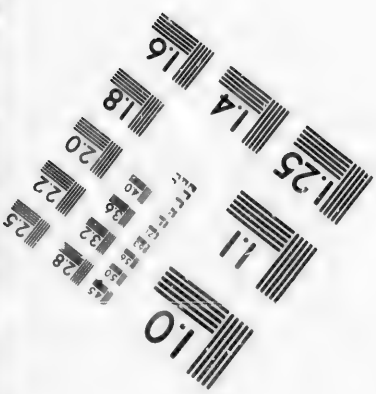

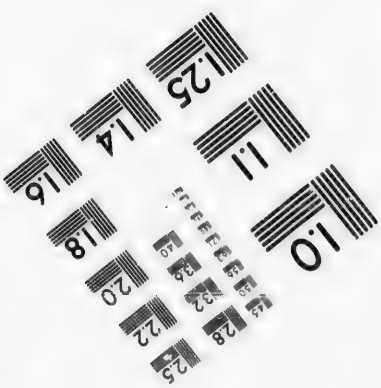

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"That is why you can hurt us all so much, Andree," he said.

"So-o," she said again, and her hands fell idle on her lap and her big eyes burned as she stared across the room.

Dick looked at her with amused comprehension, seeing the vanity which swayed her. And at that moment there was nothing else in Grange's Andree. He took up the moccasin, touching her warm hands as he did it.

"If I paint more pictures of you may I have these?" he said. "I think I don't want you to make them for another fellow."

The scarlet blazed in her olive skin again.

"You paint me over—some more? In my new dress?"

"Perhaps. You finish those moccasins for me?"

Possibly Andree had forgotten that the moccasins were Moosta's. Possibly it would not have affected her if she had remembered. A smile curved her lips.

"Perhaps I say nemoweya, but not nemoweya nia," she said.

Dick knew well the distinction between those two "Noes."

"But you will leave out even the nemoweya next time, won't you, Andree?" he asked, and smiled as she sprang up to get the cards in sudden confusion.

His eyes followed her through the little dark room. She really was a beauty; so amazingly full of colour and movement. He had enjoyed painting that little picture of her from memory. He would enjoy much more painting from the model. There certainly was some excuse for Tempest. Then he put Tempest out of his mind. It was hardly the time to find excuses for Tempest on this point.

For ten days Andree worked on the moccasins, silencing Moosta's mild objections by promises that she would buy her more silks—blue and purple and magenta silks, and lots of little white beads to go round the edge of everything, some day. Then, one afternoon, she carried them up to the low hill behind Grey Wolf when she went to pick lowbush cranberries, and put the last stitches in them with her dreaming eyes glancing down, now and again, on the ugly little dull village below.

She was more excited about that picture than she had ever been in her life. Like a second Narcissus she loved her own beauty better than she loved anyone else, and the thought that Dick might make some more of those delightful colours and curves which were herself intoxicated her. She filled her bowl, and then she stitched the long tie-thongs into place, and scraps of French songs came and went on her lips. She was utterly happy, forgetful of all but the delicious, excited feeling that held her, and the day had life enough to fit her mood. Swallows were making steely-blue flashes across the

warm, golden light where they chased the glancing moths. Butterflies trembled in the tall grass-stalks where the wind went dreamily, and in the scattered balsams vireo and fly-catcher were dipping and calling.

Dick came over the crest of the hill, whistling. He came near; stopped, and looked down. In her yellow gown and the yellow light, with the soft wind in her short curls and shadow and sun across her face Grange's Andree was something to stir the most phlegmatic blood. And Dick had never been phlegmatic. Andree held out the moccasins.

"I did make feenish—pour vous," she said; and a sudden impulse brought Dick down beside her to push away the curls that made blue veins on her temples and hid the dimple in her cheek.

It was a full half-hour before he rose and went down the hill with long, swinging strides. And his eyes were uneasy. For he did not care to remember all that he had done and said in that half-hour.

To-morrow the yearly Sessions were to be held in Grey Wolf, and the one street of it was choked with passing life. In the dust a half-dozen north-bred huskies were fighting; the smell of bananas and tar and hot leather and groceries hung heavily round the Hudson Bay Store. Two Indian women squatted outside the Store with round-eyed babies on their backs, and within a score of bucks were buying ammunition and tobacco.

Dick heard Leigh's voice raised in fluent Cree expostulation, and he knew that the men were bargaining for debt on the furs of the coming winter. He swung past with a shrug. Most of those Indians were bankrupt now. They would be more bankrupt by spring, and then would begin trouble with the Hudson Bay and Revillons; starvation perhaps, and theft—all these things and many more would come in Dick's way later on. They were the warp and woof of the North-West. They were the day's work and the grim night's anxiety.

Tempest met him outside the barracks.

"An Indian has reported a Galician sick and alone in a shack along the trail to Stony Point," he said. "I can't go, because of the Judge, and Kennedy's not back. If you go at once you can be back in time for breakfast, Dick. And I'm afraid I'll have to send you."

Dick was in no mood for twelve hours and more of lonely forest. Since he came back from Edmonton he had been in no mood for twelve hours of himself.

"Damn the Galician," he said. "We could do with a few less of him."

Tempest pushed up the brim of his Stetson, looking at Dick with more friendliness than usual in his grave eyes.

"You are not very gay yourself," he said. "Feel fit to go?"

"Oh, Lord, yes. And that's more than you are, by the look of you, old man."

Tempest's face softened.

"I haven't been good company lately," he said. "But I don't want to make you pay for it. A man doesn't care to alienate one of the few friends he has affection for."

Dick looked at the ground. No; a man did not care to do it, but it was probably going to be done very shortly.

"We'll both feel better when this heat's over. It certainly was a snorter in the court-house this morning. And it will be worse to-morrow, very likely. I'll take a snack with me and go, then. Shall I take Flanks or the piebald?"

"Better have Flanks. Kennedy had the pony most of yesterday. Bring the man in if necessary. And you can't waste time, you know. There is work to put through before the cases start in the morning."

Dick nodded and went in to hurry Poley over the providing of eatables for him. His pocket-flask he filled himself. Since he came back from Edmonton it had required to be filled more often than any cases of assistance on the patrols seemed to warrant. Then he harnessed up the big chestnut into the buckboard; took such things as guesswork and knowledge suggested for the aid of the sick man, and plunged from the blazing heat of afternoon into the cool greens of the forest. The Galician might be suffering with anything from smallpox to angina pectoris or broken limbs. That did not trouble Dick. It was all in the day's work, just as the knowledge that a king-bolt or a spring or a shaft might break on this rough trail of corduroy, deep pot-holes and tree-butts was all in the day's work. Chance and danger were fed to him with his daily meals, and, like many another man, he found their sauce the principal thing which made his food worth while.

In all directions the birds were home-coming. Their calls and twitters and flurry of quick wings knit up the long aisles into runs and chords of sweet, eager sound. Scents blew along the trail to Dick's face; damp and clean and piney. Golden light dredged through the black needles of the jack-pines and the wide-spread spruces, and powdered the slender white of birch and cotton-wood with yellow dust. And, hour by hour, the beat of hoofs and the jarring of the rig could no more than faintly blur the surface of the deep, warm silence that lay like Peace itself upon the earth.

The chestnut swung along with his awkward, tireless gait; obedient to the light hand of the man whom he knew for his master; and Dick sat still, with his lean face expressionless and his eyes staring out, unblinking, below the heavy brows.

He was thinking of a comparison in Ruskin's "Ethics of the Dust"; a comparison of the awful, hopeless difference between the hyaline block which is pure, untouchable in its integrity; which unhesitatingly repulses everything evil, and of its brother block; weak, immoral, accepting corruption, unable to deny the insiduous power of corroding fluids. To the lay eye those two blocks looked alike, even as he and Tempest had looked alike—years ago. Life had used various acids to test the two men. But Tempest only had won out. Grange's Andree might break his heart and his work, but neither she nor anything else could make him evil. Dick of his own free will had taken tests which had left their scars and their rotten places, and which had eaten out of him the power to stand where he would have chosen to stand now.

Fully he saw this, as a man may bring himself unflinchingly to look on himself. And still he drove through the calling musical forest with that concentrated look on his face. Ahead came faintly the smell of cooking-fires; of green wood smoke and fresh-grilled bacon and coffee. Round a sharp elbow in the trail showed a clearing sunk among the dark pines and a knot of covered wagons like huge brown beetles asleep. Where the flames pulsed up women moved and children's laughter echoed, sweet and shrill. A man slouched forward big and sunburnt, leaving a trail of tobacco-smoke blue on the still air.

Dick pulled up. He knew these for settlers trekking in with their wives and children to the Peace River country; and he knew that they had left Manitoba when the last snows yet patched the earth, and that the leaves of fall would be orange and red on the long, silent forest trails before they homed at last to the new, unhandled places that waited them. The man's hands showed callosities along the palm. He and his mates had worked their way up these many hundred miles by splitting wood for the river-steamers; trenching ground for a farmer; cutting a much-needed trail with the aid of the Mounted Police. And the green summer moved over their heads, and their cattle fattened on the lush grasses, and their children grew brown and strong as they went, untroubled, trusting in their gods, to an unknown future.

"We heered there was apt to be a river somewheres," said the man, and touched his thick-haired head in vague salute. "You could likely tell us, sir. Would we want to raft our freight over?"

"There are a creek or two close by. You can cross those very easily," said Dick. "You'll have to raft over the Peace, of course. But you won't be there for a good while, I imagine."

"We've rafted two a'ready. Durned slow work. What's that, missus?"

A young, bright-eyed woman with a baby in her arms spoke at his ear.

"Ask the gentleman won't he have supper, Jerry. It's waitin'."

"No, thanks." Dick looked at the two. They were the kind of importations Randal would have approved. "I'll get something where I'm going. That's a remarkably young settler you've got there."

"Born on the trail." The man handed up the pink and white bundle with pride. "The missus she would have him christened in Grey Wolf yes'day. Guess we won't find no parsons where we're going."

"You'll have one monthly—like the bills in cities. But there are no doctors or nurses or hospitals." Dick looked at the woman. "If your children get sick, you'll have to cure them yourself," he said.

"Jerry can," said the young wife, and her face glowed. "He kin do most all things, I guess." And Dick's last sight as he drove on was of the two strolling back, close together, to the red fires and the brown wagons and the dark forest which made their home.

The forest had been Dick's home so many times. She was the breath of the North-West; the door of Life; the lover who called men, flattered them, played with them, and who stood against them in her austerity the long winter through with face changed and aloof and unconcerned. Dick loved her best in her latter moods, when he met her as he had ever done, with set teeth and fingers crooked to tear from her that which was necessary for his bare life. He loved her then because of the pain she gave him; because her very sternness made him more of a man; because she paid him in self-respect for all she took from him. And self-respect was not the usual coin of Dick's exchange.

The sun dropped big and crimson behind the dark pine-trees ranks. The bird-songs frayed into tender silence, and the pink flush died out of the sky and the blue shadows darkened and thickened. Where pot-holes and tree-boles made alike black blots on the trail and the buckboard bumped out of one to bump over the other, Dick's keen eyes saw the little low log cabin half-hid among the swaying blue-grass just where the lip of the forest fell away to the open downs. Dick hitched the chestnut to the broken snake-fence; brushed through the tall grass to the door, and pushed it wide. A cool scent of hemlock boughs and water came to his heated face. Then something moved in the dusky shadows; took a slush-light from beside the stove, and showed as a woman, wrinkled and worn, with a white shawl on the slender, straight shoulders. Dick stepped back, embarrassed and amazed.

"I—I beg your pardon," he said. "I was told—isn't there a Galician sick in this shack? I was told he was alone."

She answered him in French; the old-world French of Normandy and Touraine.

"There is a Frenchman here—my husband. He was seeking work, and he fell ill."

"The Indian said he was a Galician. I hope he is not very sick, madame?"

"I thank you, monsieur. He is very tired." She held the light toward the rough bunk, and Dick stooped over it, feeling for the pulse in the knotted, sinewy wrist. The dignity in the withered old face and the slow, refined tongue had over-set him for the moment, and the weak passage of the blood through the old thin body on the bunk told him more than he was quite ready to put into words. For his own young vigorous life and his knowledge gave him the truth without hesitation.

He pulled his flask out and lifted the half-unconscious man. Anything was better than inaction with that grave, sweet face looking out of the shadows.

"He has lived a long and a difficult life, madame," he said civilly.

"And he was not fitted for it," she said. "Mary, the mother of all men, will give this man his rest."

Dick shot one glance at her.

"Then you know it, madame?" he said. "I—I was afraid——"

She smiled just a little, holding the slush-light near.

"Love has quicker eyes than the eyes of a stranger, monsieur," she said; and Dick, half-abashed, laid the grey head back on the grass-stuffed pillow, and took the light from her hand.

"Let me put it aside," he said. "It is not needed. I do not think he will suffer, monsieur, your husband."

"Bien," she said softly as the sigh of a breeze, and sat on the bunk-side holding the chilling, withered hand between her own.

Dick trod gently to the window and waited there, astride of a box. He felt the hush of her great acceptance of the inevitable closing down on him. Out of the storms and the sordid things that were breaking his own life he had come twice to-day into the beauty and the purity and the wisdom of love: those two in the forest with the child between them, strong and glad, beginning a new life together; these two in poverty and age and death, parting in the dark with a stranger as witness. He sat very still with his head in his hands, and beyond the open window the breath of the living night went by.

The man on the bed stirred, muttering. Then the old woman felt strong hands under her arms, and Dick lifted her away.

"Pardon me," he said, and raised the dying man, holding him deftly towards the incoming wind. And, slow and more slow, through the following hour, the last fight was fought; weakly, and very nearly in silence, for the man was worn by years. At last Dick laid him down again.

"He has gone in peace, madame," he said, and walked to the door and stayed there until in a little she came to him.

The night was grave and pale with stars where the wandering wind blew the grass on the low-sloped hills. Night-hawks were calling, and their thin "peent peent" slid, fine as a thread, along the large stillness. The forest stood motionless, a black wedge with no end to it, and Dick turned his eyes from it to the little indistinct shape at his side.

"It is that you win much gratitude, monsieur, you men of the Mounted Police," she said, and her voice was lower and very steady.

"I have done no more than my duty, madame."

"Then of that common word you do make a beautiful thing," she answered, and Dick turned on her in sudden bitterness.

"Do not offer me gratitude," he said. "I did not come here in pity——" He broke off, tried to shape an apology, and felt her withered hand on his shoulder.

"You have done no more than your work, then," she said. "And a man's work is himself. I have lived long enough with a man to know that. But the one ennobles the other, monsieur."

"Not always." Dick spoke dryly. "We can shame our work, and it can shame us."

"And yet you can rise above shame nobly—you men," she said, as though remembering.

Dick moved with a sudden jerk.

"You think that?" he said. "I congratulate you on your —your imagination, madame."

She looked past him to the forest where in many thousand little round nests the warm eggs lay close to the mother's breast; where in many burrows the sharp-eared vixen crouched, guarding her young; where the great pulsing life and love of the universe beat the deathless tune in the blood of a myriad hearts. And something of the eternal fellowship of the world spoke on her lips.

"It is the age for struggle," she said. "The age for fight. The young cry their souls out to gain what they desire—and the taste of those drops is very bitter to the tongue. And the pride of the struggle is more than they will forego. And yet

for us there are compensations, monsieur. Like little children we creep home and say, 'Our God does understand—all things. For He is bigger than our creeds!'"

"God is only another name for creed—any creed. The creed of the Koran or the Eddas or the Zenda-vesta—all creeds. And God is no more, madame."

"A creed is something made and accepted by our finite intelligence. How dare you or the world judge an infinite intelligence by that?"

Dick was silent. This old woman with the toil-worn hands and the cotton dress and the speech of courtly France was only one of the many anomalies which had come under his hand in this new ever-changing Canada. But she had stirred him. He wanted to say more, and he held his lips locked, fearing lest he should say too much. In a little she spoke again.

"I have kept you long. And perhaps you come from far. I am deeply indebted to your courtesy, monsieur, and you shall tell me what is now your desire for me and—for him."

"I have to get back at once, I'm afraid," said Dick. "If you care to come with me I can fasten the shack safely until the afternoon. If not I will come or send for you then."

"I will stay until then. But you have had no rest—no food. If you——."

"Thank you; I can't wait." Dick struck a match, and in the blue spurt of light he looked at his watch. "I can only just make it," he said. "I have work to do to-day—this morning."

"May the good God prosper you in it," she said gravely, and Dick laughed.

"Gad, he could be better employed," he said. And then he suddenly stooped and kissed her hand.

"It's for women such as you that men have died—and will die," he said. "Because you believe in us, madame."

Then she heard his spurred feet go quickly through the grass to the fence, and the sharp tone of his voice as he backed the chestnut and sprang into the buckboard. She watched for his salute as the horse jumped forward in the traces, and then she turned back into the hush of the shack and sank on her stiff old knees by the bunk.

"The dear Lord have mercy on that lad," she said. "For it seems plain to me that he stands at the cross-roads of his life."

It was after this that Dick began the little gallery of sketches and paintings and vivid charcoal outlines of Grange's Andree which were to make the eyes of men burn with dry tears and their heart-beats quicken long after the beautiful warm flesh which had been a woman was gone away from human eyes for ever. Something which she did not understand held

Andree from speaking to Tempest of these meetings, and something which all men understood held anyone else from telling him of the easel set up in the little back-parlour at Grange's and of the work that went on there. Andree was tired of Tempest. Nothing which he said or did could flatter her as that quick-handed, lazy-eyed man flattered when he sat among his tubes and brushes and made her laugh at her laughing self out of the canvas; but it was not in her nature to let go of any living thing which gave her such adoration as Tempest gave.

Dick had sufficient conscience to avoid Tempest and Slicker when he was able, and Slicker, who had come back to Grey Wolf to straighten such of Ducane's affairs as he could, helped him there. Slicker was lonely when Jennifer had gone East to her mother and the old home; he found no comfort in Tempest's grave silences, and he hated Dick with a virulent hate. The heat of the long summer sapped his strength more than a little, and with that began the sapping of his conscience, until it seemed more than likely that Slicker would take Ogilvie's position as remittance-man of Grey Wolf if something were not done. Hints or suggestions from Leigh or Bond or even Tempest only confirmed defiance in him, and then Dick took matters into his own hands on one burning day in late fall when the smoke from the forest-fires came down and blanketed Grey Wolf with a thick pungency which brought an acrid smart to the eyes and a breathlessness to the throat.

Slicker was in the bar with a red-headed freighter who had just driven his team over Halliday's Hill, and who had asked Slicker to drink with him. Slicker did not like the freighter on further acquaintance, and he sat with him at a little table in the corner and tried to think of an excuse to go away from the flow of vulgar talk.

Suddenly the knot of breeds which Jimmy was serving by the door split to let Dick through, followed by a little alert florid man whom Slicker knew for the fire-ranger of Grey Wolf district. Many of the tables were full, for over a dozen teams had come in from the South. Dick gave one sharp glance from end to end; picked his man without hesitation, and walked over to Slicker's corner. He leaned his hands on the table, and stooped over, speaking suavely to the red-headed man.

"Mr. Pery," he said. "You camped at Halliday's Rift two nights ago, and, by some curious oversight, you forgot to put your fire out when you went on. As you have never done such a thing before, of course, it may interest you to know that it is burning yet. And so is Halliday's oat-crop, and all the south end of his section, and possibly his home-lot as well. Do you happen to smell wood-smoke?"

Pery sprang up. He had a virulent tongue; but under Dick's eyes the bluster fizzled out like fire beneath the hose. Slicker felt a pang of envy. He believed himself as much of a man as Dick—if not more. But he could not have silenced the freighter to listen to such words as Dick spoke now.

"You had better be careful, Mr. Pery. I imagine you know the fine for carelessness of this sort; but if you don't we shall be happy to enlighten you when Sergeant Tempest hears your case. Your kind offer to go out with Mr. Carruthers and the rest of us to help Halliday will be an extenuating circumstance, of course. What is it, Carruthers?"

He wheeled as the fire-ranger spoke at his elbow.

"The hotel-man—what's his name? Grange? Well, Grange reckons he can get a half-dozen together. And there's you—and myself—and these two?"

He spoke hurriedly, putting a half-question into the words. Dick saw refusal on both faces, and a little smile ran into his eyes. He liked arranging matters so that men should force themselves to do the thing they disliked.

"Mr. Warriner won't go. There might be some danger. I don't know if the same reason applies to this other gentleman——"

"That settled those two," said Carruthers, a few minutes later. "You have rather brutal methods, you know, and the boy looks a bit delicate for the work. But we'll want everyone we can get. I'm dead afraid Halliday will lose everything he has—and Plunkett may do the same. Here are Grange's haul—eight. That's better than he promised."

The smoke curled among the boles of the trees as the men rode South at a slinging gallop. It rose in the long tree-galleries like incense in some dark, still cathedral. In boggy places where the damp drew it low it lapped along the ground like the grey waves of a shoreless sea. On the rim of a rocky ridge where flames forked out of the billow below Carruthers reined up, glancing round with his reddened eyes.

"Is there any man can get us through by a short cut to Halliday's?" he asked. "We can't go down there now."

"I can." Dick pushed forward. "There's a possible trail through a coulée, and across a muskeg. But if any man falls out he may not get found again."

"That's so. Close up, gentlemen." Carruthers reined in behind Dick. "Kick her into it," he said, and with a thunder of hooves the little army swung to the right along the hill-top.

Slicker was riding a pony of Ducane's, and when the unstable muskeg came underfoot in the drifting smoke something of the craven spirit of its master seemed to possess it and it endeavoured to lie down. Slicker got off and explained his

own desires with the whip-butt, and Grange helped him. But before the pony had made his choice of the two evils Grange spoke, and his usual giggle was high and weak.

"I guess they've cut it," he said.

Slicker looked round. The muskeg was like a room with four irregular grey walls. There were neither doors nor windows to that room, nor any sound in it but the far-off sound of the windy fire running in the trees. He turned his startled blue eyes on Grange's inefficient little face, and curbed the words on his tongue.

"Well, we're all right. The muskeg won't burn."

"But we can't git out. An' the smoke may come over. An' we got no food—an' no nothing."

"Dick will come back for us," said Slicker. And then his heart said it again, with a sudden shock of surprise. He believed that he hated and mistrusted Dick. He knew that he had shown Dick all the insolence in his power. And yet he knew quite certainly that this man who had betrayed Jennifer's confidence; who was playing a double game with Tempest; who never upheld the honour of the Law he served one whit more than he had to—he knew that this man would come back through the fire to find them. Why he knew he could not explain; and because this vexed him he unsaddled the pony and invited it to lie down, and hammered it again with the whip-butt because it wouldn't.

The trail into Halliday's Rift was an evil one to the men who followed Dick that day. East and West the fire was eating into the forest with fierce, swift jaws; snapping at tall trees and passing on with reddened dripping fangs. Down open galleries the smoke was thinned by the clear shimmer of heat, and where little fires ran rapidly in the undergrowth came crackling noises that sounded like detached grace-notes on the huge roaring body of sound. The smoke blew across them; blotting out sense and sound. It lifted, showing spouts of flame against the tall canopy of black. And then they stumbled on burnt and broken timber; hot and tangled, and flaming yet here and there, but promising a way through where the fire would not come, because it had already worked its will.

It was a way through, with men like Carruthers and Leigh and Dick to make that way. But it was done principally on foot and altogether in torment. The smouldering earth burnt their boots and caused the horses to rear and snort. Charred logs were white-hot to the touch, and acrid thick smoke tormented their labouring chests. But they won through it to the width of fresh-ploughed land beyond, and here Dick spoke a consecutive sentence for the first time in two hours.

"Good man, Halliday," he said. "I should think he had saved the house. We'll be out of it across this."

And then, like men passing out of Purgatory with its marks upon them, they rode up to the house. On the east the furrows had belted it in to safety; but down in the oatfield flames were running with the crackling of thorns under a pot, and below the pouring smoke the fighting-line of little figures swayed back and forth, taking a little here to lose it elsewhere. Dick spoke again as the men flocked round a tub of water by the kitchen door; sluicing throats and faces, and gasping with relief and with the sting of the water on their burns.

"Where's Slicker?" he said sharply. "And Grange?"

The men looked at each other. Smeared, blackened, with blood-shot eyes and drawn faces they were hideous enough. But they turned from the more hideous fear which each read in his neighbour's eyes. Dick swung himself back to the saddle.

"I hope you'll have luck with Halliday's oats," he said. "Come up, you old devil."

His big gelding staggered, and Leigh caught at the bridle.

"What are you going to do, Heriot?" he said.

"Oh—just going for a ride," said Dick lightly; and he jerked his bridle free and disappeared into the smoke that rolled above the plough-line.

"There goes a man," said Leigh, and rubbed his eyes. "But I wouldn't quite like to name the figure of the chances he's taking of finding them."

"He's taking more chances than that," said Carruthers. "Well; I guess we'd best go and do what he brought us for, anyway."

Beyond the plough-land and the burnt timber such safety as there was left Dick, and he charged into the columned distances where the fire threaded about to loop him in. Every fibre of him was quick with the knowledge that he must save Slicker. Jennifer loved Slicker, and it was through Dick that he was here, and that thought stung sharper than the little sparks upon his hands. The fate of Grange did not trouble him particularly. He had not very much reverence for human life, and Grange would have to die some day, anyhow. He would have gone after Grange, had the man been alone, because such matters were scheduled in his mind as the natural thing. But a little bit of Grange, such as his charred back-teeth or his knife, would have satisfied Dick very nearly. Slicker was different. He had to bring Slicker out unharmed or to stay in himself; but he was not sure if the choice would be given him.

And yet there was a half-wild delight to him in the danger: in the thunder of the nearing army which shook the forest; in the belching smoke and the rockets of flame that shot the sky, and in the shrieking and the whistling and the almost human screams. Birds flew by, low and darting. One brushed

his cheek, and fell dead in his hand. It smelt of burnt flesh and feathers. All the undergrowth was full of the rush and the hurry and the squealing of little animals, and a skunk, singed naked as a young rabbit, lay in the trail. Far-off a vixen was yelping in short, agonised barks. Behind him something was whining. Ahead something cried. He did not know that both were the flames running in the saskatoons and cranberries.

So far he had kept very much to the trail by which he had come. But Grange and Slicker would not be here. Somewhere they would be racing before the fire, unless they were in the muskeg. Dick's whole heart clung to the hope that they were in the muskeg, and he rode on, weaving his way through the smoke-blinded trails, more by instinct than sight.

Down the crossed trails tall trees that stood apart were like tortured Indians with their scalp-locks streaming. Grey winding-sheets of smoke wrapped them, and out of the dun clouds a column of fire fell presently leaving a scarlet streak across the sight. Red flames ran like merry monkeys up the swinging moss-beard of an ancient spruce; twitched little branches off and flung them on Dick's head. Flames crept unseen up the stairway of a hollow trunk, and waved triumphant banners as the wild bees rolled out in a terrified swarm or the squirrels rushed and tumbled to their death below. And everywhere the forest moaned and cried, and fought the coming death, and bowed and fell before it. In the air; from the sky; up from the tormented earth, the man recognised the cry of the helpless against the devourer; of nature against the hideously unnatural; of life against death. Branches cracked and flew off with the report of pistols. Tall trees pitched sideways with a human shriek, bearing others down; and the fire leapt on the ruin with the chuckling hurry of the despoilers of the slain.

A man who knew less of horses than Dick did could never have forced the terrified gelding down those trails where he plunged and reared and struggled against the bit that was growing hot in his mouth. Heat seared the eyeballs and parched the lips; shooting flames snatched and bit, and smoke drove into the labouring lungs. The gelding pitched suddenly; and before Dick found his feet again the glazing eyes and shivering outstretched body told him all that he needed to know. He stooped, wrenching off his spurs in two quick movements.

"But I've only one boot-sole left," he said, and turned and crashed into the brush with never a look behind. The dying horse had come to the end of the passage, even as he himself would come some day. But it had done its work first. If he brought so good a record he would be content.

It was Slicker, smoking his fifth cigarette, and still trying to cheer Grange, who saw something loom and gather shape and stagger near in the rift. He ran forward; caught Dick's shoulder, and felt the cloth crisp and melt under his hand. But sudden strangling, unexpected sobs kept him from any words at all. Dick did not heed. Stopped in his blind reeling progress he sat down promptly. Then he laid himself flat, feeling the cool spongy mosses against the naked parts of his smarting body.

Later, Dick rode back into Grey Wolf on Slicker's pony; and, once the familiar trail was reached, Grange raced home on his raking bay mare to his work and to Moosta. But where the one man rode with his burnt shoulder stiffening under the singed shirt, and his foot throbbing where the boot-sole was charred off, and where the other man walked, silent and with long light steps, there was little excitement or speech. Slicker raised his head at last.

"I guess you know I hate you," he said bluntly. "Why don't you hate me?"

"Perhaps I recognise that you have the better right, Slicker."

"Well—if you hadn't been such a cur to Jennifer——"

"Do you mind if she is hurt or not?"

"Do I *mind*? Why—she's always been everything to me. She's like a sister and a mother, and she's the best chum—what are you looking like that for?"

"I was appreciating the way in which you have been proving your words lately, Slicker."

Slicker flushed hotly. He trudged on; and presently he said:

"You always were a sneering beast."

"I know. But I do not expend my powers on my neighbours only, I assure you."

"What's a fellow to do?" Slicker spoke sulkily. "I won't go into my uncle's business in Toronto. He's always at me about it—and I won't *do* it."

"You want to get your neck under some yoke, though I am the last man to preach obedience to you. Why not try our game? It has some elements of interest."

"Go into the Police?" Slicker stopped short with his blue eyes wide.

"Exactly. If you could manage to think while you were moving—thank you. I would rather like to get back to Grey Wolf before dark."

It was long before Slicker spoke again. Then he said:

"Do you advise it?"

"Do I do what? Oh—the Police, you mean? My dear fellow, no. I never advise a man to do anything. It is a most

injudicious and unnecessary way of making enemies. But if you speak to Tempest I have no doubt that he will advise you. He has a soul above the sordidness of personal results."

On the edge of the long ugly street with Grey Wolf clinging to the sides of it Slicker hesitated, jerking his words out.

"I called you a beast, and you are. But you're a brave beast. I concede you that. I hate you because you—you don't seem to recognise what a man naturally owes a woman. But I thank you for coming after me."

"Ah. And now that you have paid your debts you can go on hating me with a clear conscience. I think I would prefer that you did, so long as you realise that you forfeit that right so soon as you place yourself in the same category with myself. You are heading for it, you know."

"Well, I--I guess I'll likely speak to Tempest to-morrow," said Slicker, and he did it; disturbing Tempest where he worked at his office table, and plunging into the subject impetuously.

"My lungs are O.K.," he said. "There was no disease, you know. Only a weakness. De Choiseaux says any doctor would pass me."

Tempest thrust aside his papers and gave his attention reluctantly.

"Well, you should have a pretty fair idea of what it means by now," he said. "You're not blind."

"You should have a better. Dick told me to dress by what you said."

"Ah." Tempest smiled. "Did he? Well—you're a teetotaler, aren't you?"

"No. I've been drinking quite a little bit lately. I was more than half-seas over the other night." Slicker looked at him with his blue eyes darkening. "I want some kind of life that'll make a man of me, Tempest," he said.

Tempest sat still for a space with his jaw in his hand. Then he said:

"Do you think that would help you?"

"Why—I reckon it should. Don't you?"

Tempest turned and looked at him squarely.

"You've seen one little corner of Western life from the inside, Slicker," he said. "You know tne two big temptations a man has to meet—for himself or for others. He is no more fit or able to meet them because he has a uniform on his back. That's the mistake that gets us so many wasters in the Force. A man has got to be a man before he goes into the R.N.W.M.P., or I guess he's not particularly likely to become one afterwards. There is so much which he can hide beneath his authority if he has a mind to. And that is a temptation in itself."

"I don't want to drink or—or do anything I shouldn't,

Tempest. I am sure I could keep straight if it was worth while."

"It is always worth while. But I see your argument. We are made of such poor stuff that we must have a special motive"—he turned suddenly, and his eyes softened. "No," he said. "That's a lie. We are made of such good stuff that we can do most things if we have a motive at all. But I'm not going to help you into our Service if your only motive is to try to run away from temptation. You wouldn't be doing it, anyway. You'd likely be running in."

"It's not exactly a temptation yet. I could easily give it up if I had something special to interest me."

"Sure? Well, I don't want to discourage you. We need all the men we can get, and we need the finer kind of men—like yourself. There's work in plenty for them. But a drunken life and a sinful life go easily together, Slicker. There's no use burking that truth. You'll have to know it and a good deal worse if you choose to be one of us. You'll see very many sordid things, and very many hideous things, and a few very glorious things. And you'll have your full share of temptations. There are enough of those for every man, no matter what he is made of."

"I know that. But I reckon I want to try it, Tempest."

"Then, for God's sake, keep straight." Tempest's voice sharpened—it sharpened more easily now than it used to do. "The Force isn't a nursery for men who can't handle themselves and who expect the discipline to do it for them. And it isn't a stalking-horse for the men who want to do evil without being found out." He stood up, laying his hand on the boy's shoulder. "I'll send in your name if you like. And for many reasons I'll be glad to do it. But remember this, Slicker. Our uniform isn't a shield against temptation, and it can be a cloak for sin. The man himself has got to mean as much as the uniform, or the thing's a mockery—a damned mockery." He stopped with a swift stab of conscience. In how far was he upholding these tenets which he taught—which he had always taught and always practised until now? "We have all got our own rows to hoe, Slicker," he went on. "And it isn't easy to hoe them well. But I believe you'll do your best."

"I'll try." Slicker's young face was grave and flushed, and his blue eyes were anxious. "I—I couldn't say much to Dick; he's such a sneering beast. But I do recognise that it—it means a good deal in many ways to wear the uniform. And I do want to make good, Tempest."

"That's right, old chap. Heaven send you do. Now I must turn you out, for I'm busy. Come round to-night and give me particulars. I think it is more than likely that we'll be proud of you later on, you know."

"Thank you, Tempest." Slicker flushed with pleasure. "You are a good sort." And he went out in a glow of friendship and pity for the man who was "having such a rotten time with that little devil Andree." He passed Grange's bar with his chin up, and he went for a long walk in the forest, concocting a letter in which he would explain it all to Jennifer. But the exact connection of the "sneering beast" with this matter which was so exciting him seemed to escape him, although it did not escape Jennifer when she read the letter.

Through the fall and the early winter life went forward as it ever did in Grey Wolf. A few new clerks came and went in the Stores. A prospector drowned himself from a canoe in the Lake, and the young ice broke beneath two sledfulls of freight and necessitated court-cases before anyone would pay the damage. Hotchkiss was publicly convicted and sent to the cells for a month, on account of a specially-prolonged torture of Mrs. Hotchkiss, and Dick varied the monotony of that month for him by all the refinements of unease which discipline allowed. The trackers had come and gone. The yearly Treaty party had passed through from some vague place on the map, and they too had gone. Even the birds had left Grey Wolf before the hunters went to the chilling woods for their long season of silence and labour. Sleighs took the place of wheels, and furs of light coats and uniforms. Tempest had several long journeys on special investigation business, and Dick had much routine work, with or without Kennedy's help. Twice he had written to Jennifer; once she had answered—just a few sweet, true, simple lines, like herself, and Dick carried them in his breast-pocket with the little picture he had made of her. And, when time allowed him, he painted Andree.

He had meant to paint a few pictures of her only. To rouse her vanity to a living force and then persuade her to break with Tempest completely. He knew that nothing short of her actual refusal to speak to him or touch him would cure Tempest. How deeply the man loved her he hardly knew. But how terribly her coquetries and her indifference and her occasional half-yieldings were effecting him Dick knew well. It was time to stop this thing. He should have stopped it long ago. And yet he did not. An explanation with Tempest would mean a discontinuance of those hours which were a sheer delight to the artist in him, and, though this he guessed but vaguely, to more than the artist.

Dick had that force of spirit which dashed colour and heat on all things which he chose to handle. He had the insight which is brutal in its clarity of interpretation, and he had the sick and restless soul which can never run straight to any goal. All these things made a very good medium through which to

paint Grange's Andree, and Grange himself began to take pride in the filling portfolio that stood in the corner of the little back-parlour. That girl-head with the smooth round arms and shoulders came to be a joy to more than Dick. He turned her into an Indian, with hair sleeked down, and olive limbs straight and tall. He made a Greek girl of her, draping her with sheets from Moosta's box. He painted her with hair and dress blown back, hauling on a team of husky dogs brought south by a freighter. He sketched her until he knew every trick of her—better than ever he had known Jennifer. It was all a pleasure to himself; a half-acid, tormenting pleasure, because he knew that it must end very soon, and what it might be for Andree herself he neither knew nor cared. She would do anything he told her to do, and when he forbade her to speak to or to look at Tempest again she would obey.

But the days went on and he did not do it. They went on and Tempest did not know of it. For it is only natural that the person most concerned in a matter of this sort is the one kept longest in ignorance. But at last, just after Christmas, the day came for Tempest to know. And it was Miss Chubb, innocently forgetful, who told him.

CHAPTER XI.

"IL M'AIME, JE VOUS DIS."

MISS CHUBB was kneading bread on the morning when Tempest went over to the Mission on some business and stayed a while in the kitchen to talk. Miss Chubb usually expected it, and produced cake, or apples, or a cup of tea as an offering. And Tempest usually got good medicine out of her real commonsense and cheerful outlook in her cramped life. This morning he had something rather special to tell her, for the confirmation of his Inspectorship had come up by the last mails, and there would probably be big changes for him before long. He explained this to Miss Chubb, sitting back against the kitchen shelf and watching her thin hands glancing and turning in the tin pan.

Miss Chubb stopped her work abruptly, staring at Tempest. There was a smudge of flour on her sandy eyebrow, and it gave the suggestion of a terrier with its ears cocked.

"You don't say!" she said. "Well, I do call that fierce."

"That is not the usual manner in which to convey congratulations," suggested Tempest; but he laughed as Miss Chubb went to work again.

"Why—maybe not. But *we're* not to be congratulated. They didn't make you Inspector to leave you in this little hole, did they?"

"I can't tell you. It is not likely. I shall be sent somewhere else, I'm——"

He stopped abruptly, but Miss Chubb knew that the end of the sentence would be "I'm afraid." She set her pale lips together. For she knew, too, why Tempest would be afraid to leave Grey Wolf.

"I suppose," she said. "Grey Wolf isn't big enough to stand such style. They'll send you expeditioning some place—or cleaning up a post that's let its standard down." She laughed, half-nervously. "You have the name for being a real moral influence where you go."

Tempest's answering laugh was constrained.

"I didn't come over here to be abused, Miss Chubb," he said.

"Why——" Miss Chubb proceeded to set out the bread-pans with a celerity born of much practice. They did not seem to aid her in her completion of the sentence, and she turned to the back door as three black-eyed, black-haired, mahogany-skinned heads thrust themselves in, whimpering. Then she slammed a pan down in sudden desperation.

"I wish there were no Saturdays in the week. I certainly do! What has got you children this morning? Some of you have been under my feet all day. What's wrong, Annie? Jane, did you make Pauline cry any more?"

The children sidled in, with fingers in mouths and eyes glancing through the elf-locks which Miss Chubb had brushed and plaited into neatness a few hours since. From their whispers, punctuated by covert peeps at Tempest, the fact was elicited that David Mikwas had fallen out of the swing on top of Pauline. Miss Chubb examined bruises; sent the two elder children out again, and gave Pauline a dab of dough to play with. Then she returned to her work with a sigh that seemed to come straight through her thin body from the toes.

"Mr. Barnes always goes off for the whole day, Saturdays," she said. "I don't blame him. I should if I was teaching the alphabet and simple division all week. But those children do choose to have all their accidents on Saturdays, and Miss Hemming isn't much use with them. Pauline's been left here all summer, too, poor little mite. That father of hers ought to do something for her, Sergeant. I—I mean——"

"Never mind." Tempest laughed. "It's too new yet, isn't it? Job Kesikaw is her father, Barnes told me. A clever trapper, and he must be making a good living. Doesn't he pay anything for Pauline's up-keep?"

"Never a penny. And the way he treated Florestine was cruel. You knew he was married to Pauline's mother first? Well, he was. A good trapper, you call him? I call him a bad lot."

She slapped the dough into one pan after the other, and set them aside to rise. There was not time for pause in this Mission life of the West.

"I can't make him pay, you know, Miss Chubb." Tempest glanced down at the little brown ball whose chubby fingers were rapidly making the white dough as brown. "But if I come across him I'll see what I can do. On the Reserve, is he?"

"Why, I suppose." Miss Chubb scraped the pan with a noisy knife. "He came to see Pauline yesterday, and got a good square meal for nothing. These Indians know how to

time their meal-hours. And then he carried off a hunk of pie in his hat."

Tempest laughed and stood up.

"I will certainly remind him of that when I see him. Here are some visitors for your bale-room, Miss Chubb. Why—it looks like Grange's wife; but I don't know who's driving her——"

"Oh, dear." Miss Chubb rubbed vigorously at her flour-caked arms. "Thanks be we probably won't wear clothes in Heaven, or I suppose someone would be set to the distribution job. Yes; it's Moosta. And she'll buy one pinafore, and talk for an hour about those wonderful pictures of Andree."

"Pictures of Andree?"

"Why——" Miss Chubb looked at him. Then she went white. "It's nothing," she said. "Mr. Heriot has been sketching her, as he does everyone else, you know."

"Oh," said Tempest indifferently. "I see. I just hadn't thought of it."

He made his good-bye cheerfully, and Miss Chubb never guessed at the suspicion and the fierce jealousy which quickened into concrete fear at her words. But she looked after him as the tinkling sleigh slid over the white ground, and her eyes were tender and pitying.

"There's a good man spoiled," she said. "Unless Dick Heriot has put a spoke in his wheel. And I don't know if that will mend matters much."

That night Tempest found occasion to go into Grange's back-parlour for the first time. Moosta only was there, among her babies; and, as usual, her English and her comprehension fled before Tempest. But he looked at that face which hung in its dark beauty below the Madonna; and Moosta, in her pride, dragged Dick's portfolio from the corner, and spread it before him.

"Him s'pose Andree très jolie," she said. "Goot, eh?"

"Very good," assented Tempest, and laid his hands upon those bold, merciless paintings with their alluring dashes of colour and their suggestive tragedies.

And then he went home, and he did not sleep at all. Dick had interpreted Andree's beauty as even Tempest had never realised it. There were faults, plenty of them, in the workmanship; but the power was undeniable. And Dick had done more, much more. He had shown out the animal side of her terribly, callously, and yet with that strange charm which made men love Andree even when they recoiled from her. Those pictures were clever, cruelly clever. Dick had never done such good work before, and he would not do it again. For not again would he have such a model or such a reason.

Tempest threshed from side to side of his bed, burning with a righteous anger and grief.

Dick was his friend: his friend. And Andree was the woman he loved. And it was Dick who was taking Andree away from him. Dick who had perhaps been doing it all these months. Dick, who had reviled her, laughed at her, urged Tempest to shake himself free of her. Dick, who had held her up to contempt as he now held her up to the unlawful admiration of any man who happened to stray into Grange's back-parlour. Tempest shivered, guessing for how many eyes Moosta might have dragged out that portfolio with her placid grins and her "Goot, eh?" To Tempest in his reverence the thing was an indecency, a profanity, an outrage. His fury against Dick became a live thing through that night; but he said no word to the man because the thought of the woman over-rode all else in his heart. He must get Andree away from this life—now, at once. By bribery, by stratagem, by persuasion—any method would do as long as it took her from Grey Wolf.

It happened in the next afternoon that Dick found the fat German who had bought Robison's land in the bar, and he stayed so long talking to him of possibilities concerning the Canada Home-lot Extension Company, which, as Dick warmly hoped, were now finding themselves baffled along this line of extension, that he had no time to spare for Andree. And it was the first day he had been in the hotel that week, too, for he had been chasing a defaulting freighter along the Moon-Dance trail. He went out at last by the back passage, and there Andree stood waiting for him; half-defiant, half-piteous. He took her face between his hands, and her strange, lawless beauty unsteadied him as it had done more than once or twice of late.

"I will not have you come and not come to me, Dick," she said. "You must speak with me. You must."

"Do you think I let a girl say must to me, Andree?" He laughed a little, but he did not move his eyes from her face. "What have you got that red thing round your head for? You look like a Bacchante—or a bit like the Fornarina."

Andree did not know what they were. But she knew how to meet the unwilling admiration in Dick's eyes. Very softly she drew the lids shut with her fingers. Then she said:

"Your looking does go through me. And I do not understand. And your eyes do hurt, some days. And some days Tempest does make his eyes hurt me too. Why?"

Dick's opportunities offered often enough. But he would not take them. He would not take this one.

"How should I know? Let me open my eyes and see if they'll hurt you this time. Now, what do they say to you?"

He was half-laughing, and yet idly curious. And he was not sure that he wanted those eyes interpreted fully just now.

Andree looked, drawing her delicate brows into a line. Then she pulled his face forward.

"Ah—Dick——" she said, and met his lips with her warm ones.

He had kissed her a hundred times before; carelessly, or in thoughtless amusement. But the swift passion in those clinging lips thrilled him as anything that Andree said or did had never thrilled him before. He put his hands on her shoulders and kissed her back, twice. Then he let her go, and went down to the barracks with the memory of that first kiss tingling his blood yet.

Andree flung on her fur cap and her coat, and went out. And as she passed the bar Jimmy reached an arm to catch her waist.

"Haven't seen you to-day, Andree," he said. "What——"

"Ah—diable!" said Andree, through her teeth, and she boxed his ear with a swinging blow, and ran out.

Jimmy rubbed his ear, looking after her ruefully.

"Lord, she's a handful," he said. "I wouldn't want to be the man she chose to settle down wi'."

Andree fled down the street and along the forest-trail with her eyes bright, and her blood racing in her veins. The keen, sharp air brought the brilliance to her cheeks and quickened her breath, and some vague excitement was driving her. She did not account for it; did not try. She just ran for the joy of running, and the joy of living; skimming over the tramped frozen surface, fleetly and surely as a hare. Then the gladness left her face suddenly, and she stopped, shrugging her shoulders. For Tempest had turned the corner of the trail, and he came to her swiftly. But there was a shiver of superstition in his heart. It was here he had first found Grange's Andree a year ago. Was it here that he was to lose her? He spoke of other things first, to steady himself. Then again he asked her to marry him as he had done so many times before.

"And I can give you so much now that I am Inspector," he added. "So much that you would enjoy having."

He knew better now than to plead to Andree for love. That happiness was not for him yet; perhaps not at all. But all his tenderness, all his manhood was struggling for the right to protect and cherish Grange's Andree. She pulled her hand from his petulantly, and for the first time there was no shy fear of him in her voice. That kiss of Dick's had lit in her something which Tempest could not quench. She did not know it consciously. She was far too stupid for that. But instinct told her without hesitation or surprise.

"I do not want to marry you," she said.

"But I can give you so much, dear. Think! A carriage. And pretty dresses. And servants to do as you tell them."

She pouted, looking away from his tense, earnest face. Neither could see the tragedy of that wooing. To the girl it was merely a tiresome interlude which yet pleased her vanity. To the man it was the swing in the balance of the soul he loved best.

"I—I do not want servants," she said. "I would rather have Dick to paint me."

For all Tempest's care his voice took a changed note.

"You won't have Dick long. He will soon find someone else to paint. And then what will you do?"

"He no fin' anozzer si belle." Andree flashed round on him. "He say so. Him say me best. Him *love* me, an' I love him."

She had no intention of being brutal. She spoke the thing as she believed it, simply and directly. But for a space the man at her side could not answer. Then he said, slowly:

"Does that mean that you are going to marry him?"

She spread her hands out.

"What matter?" she said. "I suppose. But I do not care for marry. He want me an' I want him. That 'nough."

"You are sure of this, Andree?"

She did not notice anything in the low, steady voice.

"Mais certainment," she said. "I do love him."

"No! No, you don't. You love me. Me. You want to come to me—not to him. Andree! Andree!"

He was holding her by both her arms, and his white face was very near. Unguessed-at defiance rose in her. She held her head back."

"I love Dick," she cried. "I love Dick! I love Dick!"

He held her, searching the fire in her face and eyes. And he believed it. The immortal thing was there. Born but to die in Andree, perhaps. But it was there. He let her go.

"I see you do," he said slowly. "I see you do."

He looked down the white trail whither she had come to him twice.

"Andree," he cried sharply. "Are you sure that he cares for you?"

And then the absurdity of the question struck him. How could Grange's Andree know the heart of a man? How could she know Dick's heart when Tempest, friend of his youth and companion of his manhood, did not know it? But Andree had no doubts.

She looked at him with bright cheeks and sparkling eyes. Her words had seemed to drive home to her a truth which she had not known. She was exulting in the discovery of some

thing new; something which belonged to her—to her very self.

"Oui," she said violently. "C'est vrai. Il m'aime, je vous dis. Ah—je lui connais."

For a moment more Tempest looked at her in silence. In the dull track she looked bright and vivid almost as a flame. But he could not ask again for that which Nature and not Andree had denied him. He would never ask for it any more. It was not to be for him to shield her from the dangers which crowded round her careless feet. He could do nothing for her. Nothing. And she needed guidance as few creatures of God's earth needed it. And then, for the last time, he took her hand and kissed it. He had never kissed her face.

"God guard you, Andree," he said, and left her. And along the winter trail she ran and ran, intoxicated with her unreasoning joy.

Dick opened the front door of the barracks to Tempest, and his voice was quick and eager.

"Watson is starting to-night instead of to-morrow morning," he said. "Can we get those permit-papers filled to send out with him?"

Through the open kitchen and up the passage the red of the winter sunset flooded up behind him, striking his outline tall and black and strong. His voice was strong, and the brown hand shut on the papers was strong. Tempest looked at him, feeling the vigour and virility in him, and in one blinding flash, realisation leapt to him. It was Dick who had done this thing to him. Dick, his friend, who had done it—knowingly, secretly, wilfully.

He went giddy for a moment, and put his hand on the wall. Then he thrust past, speaking thickly.

"No," he said. "Leave them." And he walked into the office, and turned the key on himself.

The yellow and egg-shell blue slid out of the sky. Dick went upstairs, whistling, to pack his kit for a three-days' trip to Lower Landing. Light drew back from the zenith, leaving it naked to the stars, and across the river the dark pine-forest settled into night.

But the night of the soul was on Tempest in the little bare, cold office where he sat still, staring at the wall. All round him were the maps, the blue books, the filed memoranda, the pencils, pens and rulers of his work. He had come back to that work as Dick would have gone in like case to the forest. Come back, blindly, unconsciously, that it might help him through with his pain; that work which had once meant most of all to him; that work which he had forsaken for a personal and private love, and which had its grip on all his fibres still. It reproached him now; cruelly and bitterly.

It mocked at him, asking what life had given him in place of it. A friend? Aye; a friend who had faced death with him, and had now delivered him to worse than death. A woman to love? Yes, and his right to love her was taken from him, and his prayer that he might guard her denied.

Twice Poley came to the door, intimating the advisability of meals. But Tempest had one answer only for him.

"I cannot be disturbed. I am busy," he said, and went on sitting motionless in his chair and staring at the hazy maps on the wall. Later he heard Dick and Kennedy going to bed in the room at the head of the stairs. Dick was in a wild and reckless mood, and Kennedy's bellowing laugh broke loose in strangled sputters more than once. Then night and stillness dropped on Grey Wolf, and still Tempest sat in his chair, staring at the wall.

A man had once said of Tempest that he had reduced religion and philosophy to a satisfactory working basis by fusing in himself the physical and spiritual elements until the whole was a sound leaven. This was somewhat true, and because of it Tempest suffered rather more than an ordinary man might do. For he could not blindly blame the universe and his God and the other man, and so exculpate himself. Like one of an earlier day he had set out to build a tower to Heaven and had digged a pit for his own feet instead. He had betrayed his work even as Dick had betrayed him, and he dared not call Dick the most guilty.

Beside him on the desk lay an unfinished report. It should have gone down with to-day's mail, even as those other papers should have gone. On the floor under the window were an unopened pile of official envelopes and three text-books with the pages uncut. Down at Pitcher Portage Randal was waiting to see him in regard to some trouble with the breeds there. He had been waiting more than a month. These were a handful of things only. Tempest knew the multitude that bore witness against him.

Very still he sat, and faced the array of them as they trod past him through the night. And faced also the merciless, never-ending problems of life. Why should duty and desire clash for ever? Why should spirit and flesh be constantly at war? Why should a man's knowledge of his own sin not render him more merciful towards the sins of others? Tempest knew well the need for fight in the human soul. He knew that stagnation is a bitterer, because a more final, thing than the beating out of a heart in foam upon the rocks. But he knew also that a man's duty lies neither on the rocks nor in the backwater, but down the steady, strenuous, sanely-direct stream of Life.

Tempest had dropped into a backwater to please himself

with his private loves and desires. And now he was on the rocks. He knew it, and because the pain in him would not let him be he stayed there, bruising his spirit and beating it with rods. For he could not forgive Dick; he could not let Andree go, and he could not take up his life again. And he understood that, as a man, as an immortal soul, as the one firm human link between Time and Eternity, he must do all three.

The lamp on the desk burned low and went out, leaving an evil smell of smoke and kerosine. Down the side street among the naked cotton-woods a starved Indian dog was yelping to the sky his qualifications for a canine heaven through his eternal purging away of all the fleshly joys. Insensibly that dog, emblem of his race, obtruded himself on Tempest's thought. Unfed, cursed and kicked the summer through; strapped into the traces all the winter; harness-galled, sore-footed, strained by the dragging of interminable sledges it yet had the unflagging heart which did not fail, the warm tongue for its master's hand, the ready and obedient ear for his voice. Tempest bowed his head down in his hands and thought that matter out. In some way it made his own conduct seem less excusable, less righteous.

Through long hours of struggle and wordless prayer Tempest won back to himself his belief in mankind. Dick had not betrayed him. He had been called by Nature even as Tempest himself, and the strain in the man's eyes and voice, and the thinner lines of his big body bore witness that he had recognised Tempest's prior right and had attempted to yield to it. It was Tempest who had sinned in doubting his friend. It was Tempest who had judged another man unheard. It was Tempest who had no right, no choice. Tempest who must tread the barren trail of duty, leaving the younger man free to love.

He sprang up, walking the room with his light rapid steps. This thing had gone beyond him. The sacrifice was his to make, whether he would or no. It only remained for him to make it manfully, ungrudgingly, gallantly, believing that when the great day of understanding came he would be glad of it.

But he loved Andree well, and the other man was his friend. And he was human as all strong men of flesh and blood and temper are human. Morning caught him walking still, with his fight half-fought and the future yet dim and cold before him. For he loved Andree. He loved her at this moment better than his God; and it was his friend who had taken her from him.

For Tempest the next day was filled with the ordinary routine of the post. There was the inspection of the barracks, of the stables, of the prisoners. There were complaints to

listen to from one and rebukes to be administered to another. There was a consultation with Poley concerning the amount of food consumed in the cells and in the mess-room; there were orders to give to Kennedy and to Dick. And there were the dull hours of clerical work; checking accounts, formulating reports; examining receipts and bills from the Hudson Bay on orders drawn in favour of some Indian perhaps six months back and six hundred miles away. These latter often necessitated the turning up of old diaries and note-books, and usually Tempest called in Dick to aid him here.

But he could not bear those keen eyes and that assertive presence to-day. He sent Dick out to investigate the complaint of a settler who had missed two sacks of oats from his barn, and he ground his way through his labours alone, with Kennedy doing his prisoner-patrol in the back-yard, and Poley whistling unmusically as he clumsily handled his pans and kettles in the kitchen.

Poley was of the breed of whom it is said that they "come from the Devil knows where, and are bound for the same place." Some under-tug of his life had beached him in Grey Wolf, and a curious grumbling love for Tempest had kept him there. He rolled up the passage now, and hammered on Tempest's door with his foot, his hands being otherwise occupied. Tempest halted his pen on a long column of figures to bid him enter, and Poley appeared, balancing a bowl of steaming soup on a square lump of bread. He had not treated Tempest with added deference since his promotion because, having predicted it for so long, he naturally took much of the credit of its occurrence to himself.

"Ye had no supper las' night," he said, and put the bowl down on the table. "Ner yer didn't sleep any, I guess. Where are yer *at*, Inspector? That sort o' game kin put a man away quicker'n anything. Now, you go right ahead an' git outsider that, for I'll bet yer breakfus' ain't lef' yer wi' much to yer."

Tempest looked up at the red, rough old face, and the rheumy blue eyes. A long, lonely life had not soured the milk of human kindness in Poley, and this knowledge happened to be the very thing needful for Tempest just now.

He accepted both the votive and the hidden offerings gratefully, and he did not pour the soup from the window nor scatter the bread to the few hungry birds until Poley's harsh piping whistle was raised in the kitchen quarters again. And when he settled back to his work the cloud on his face was lightened. Although it had only made a yellow-ochre patch in the snow outside, Poley's soup had strengthened Tempest's heart quite as fully as the old man ever intended it to strengthen his stomach.

It was a still evening, with a red sun dropping through a clear sky when Dick came in to make his report. He was cold and invigorated and cheerful, and he struck, more strongly than usual, the life-note which Tempest felt to be slackening in himself. And yet in him it had once been the strongest.

Dick gave his report succinctly, standing tall against the window-light.

"Morgan missed those sacks yesterday morning," he said. "But of course he thought to-day time enough to let us know, after they had churned the snow up around in order to obliterate all they might want to find out. Fortunately they hadn't gone beyond the place where they water the horses, and I tracked my man through there, and followed up to that Cree camp at Dog Point. There I found the corner of a new burnt sack being chewed by a giddé, and an old horse belonging to Double-Toed-Pigeon which looked as if he had lately been assisting at a blow-out. They didn't want to tell me anything about it." He paused a moment. "The man is Job Kesikaw —down at the Reserve."

"Oh, well, I was wanting to see that man myself." A sudden impulse came over Tempest; a sudden warmth towards the man opposite. "I'll go down with you after supper," he said. "It's full moon. Tell Poley he can put it forward a little, but not too much, and I'll have mine here to save time. But I have to see Holland first. He was complaining about the man who is renting his river-lot."

Dick gave the order to Poley, and flung himself into the big chair in the mess-room to doze and warm himself until supper came in. Something in Tempest's voice made him uneasy, and brought up sternly in his mind again the knowledge which he had been avoiding with all his strength. He faced that knowledge to-night in his usual clear-sightedness, and it made him wince.

He had gone into this game with Andree in the primal direct motive of taking her from Tempest since he could not take Tempest from her. He had lost sight of that motive long since. His primal idea now was to amuse himself. He did not love Andree. Jennifer had all his heart, and she always would have it. But Andree's beauty attracted him, and her wild spirit struck a flame from the like thing in himself. He did not love Andree, but he was losing Jennifer for her. She was dulling memory of Jennifer's pure high thoughts and words. He had not written to Jennifer lately, and well he knew why. And Andree was losing him Tempest. She was destroying in him the power to say to Tempest, "I did this for you alone." She was destroying in him the power to help Tempest along that road which he should travel, and, by so doing, it might be that Tempest would never take that road. He knew

Tempest's nature so well. That fine, nervous, excitable temperament could be so easily broken by certain things; so easily battered down on its knees. Dick did not believe that Tempest would ever go lower than his knees. But he would stay there, bowing his head in his repentance. He would take the lower place for ever, when Nature and the world ordained him for the higher.

And Dick was daily stripping from himself the right to help Tempest to take that higher place. He was doing more. He was prolonging the torment which he had set out to end. Any time in the last three months he could have brought this to a crisis for Tempest. Any time before the last month—perhaps the last six weeks, he could have said honestly to Tempest, "I am doing this for you." He could not say that now. He was afraid to tell Tempest now, because there were no honest words which he could use. He was dishonourable; a traitor to his friend, and he knew it. And yet self had sapped the will in him for so long that he could not resist it. Jennifer and Tempest meant many thousand times more to him than Andree's kisses. But he would not forego those kisses. Almost he felt that he could not. He did not blind himself here. He had deliberately slacked in himself the forces which would have fought for him against temptation, and now he had to suffer for it. And he did suffer. He had been so eager to do what seemed to him one of the real unselfish things of his life, for he had known that he might lose Tempest's friendship through it. He had known that Jennifer might hear garbled tales.

Well, he would lose Tempest's friendship—when Tempest found out. And Jennifer might hear tales—and he could not deny them. He smiled in that bitter humour which seldom forsook him. He had tried to play the honest man; the unselfish friend. In his hands it had turned to this already, and what it might turn to in the future he did not care to think. But, as had happened to him so many times in his life, he had seen the good all the way through, and had done the wrong.

Poley came in clattering with the lamp and the tray, and Dick got up and went to his room. Kennedy was there, writing a letter with stiff, cold fingers. He looked up with his ruddy boyish face perplexed.

"How do you spell niece?" he asked.

Dick gave the information. Then he looked at the lad. Kennedy was such a frank-hearted, honest fellow, and he hoped that none of the hottest fires of life would ever sear him.

"Whose niece is she, Kennedy?" he asked. But Kennedy's brow was calm.

"My own," he said. "I've got a married sister. I sent

the kiddie a Christmas present from her Uncle Jack. My, I just know how her eyes'll stick out when she gets it."

Dick left him chewing his pen-handle and chuckling, and ran down again. From his own room Tempest heard him pass along the passage, and he halted a moment in the putting on of his riding gear. His eyes were dark with the struggle that had grown more fierce in Dick's presence. He had not won out yet. For all his knowledge, all his training, all his belief, all his strength he had not yet won to the staying point. Because the staying point needs such infinitely deeper anchorage than the arriving point, by reason of the constant ebb and flow of a man's will.

The night was silver-white where a full moon flooded the earth, and the keen crystal air seemed to prickle like champagne. Over the hard snow along these beaten trails the horses swung easily, and the men rode side by side, speaking little. For each man his own thoughts were full enough company. On the edge of the moonlight the first shacks of the Reserve showed, low and darkly. Naked scrub and undergrowth made scratchy shadows to the very doors, and like shadows too, a handful of Indian dogs flicked out, leaping and barking and rolling on the snow. A sore-withered pony raised its head; then returned to its investigations among the bare twigs, and where a red fire darkened the forest to ink a few women moved with the light trembling on their black hair and eyes and dull stuff dresses. For, to the partially civilised Indian woman, bright colours are a reproach. They make her appear " too Indian."

Not many men stayed on the Reserve through the winter. But Christmas had brought some of them in, and among those Dick expected to find Job Kesikaw. They halted by the woman, and Clouds-of-Sunrise glanced up from her work of spitting moose-meat on sharp sticks for the roasting, and her broad, high-boned face was lit with humour.

" Had no meat for t'e veek," she said. " I vas s'pose some men come—eat it up for us ! "

" Why," said Dick, " what have Peter and Mike and Eusta been doing ? All at the hunting, eh ? And wouldn't Eusta take you this time ? "

Clouds-of-Morning had been at the Mission School long enough to understand more English than she spoke. She, giggling, looking on the other women who stood about in beaming approval.

" All to hunt," she said. " Akonaqui kill him."

She pointed from a girl with the lean, eager face of a hunter to the moose-meat, and the women grunted their acquiescence, watching the white men with the giggles and rallying coquetry of a company of school-girls.

"Our man's not here," said Tempest underbreath, and Dick nodded.

"We'll find him at Sebompa's, I expect," he said, and they rode on; taking the narrow twisting trails through the white still woods with accurate knowledge of their intricacies; hearing Indian talk that carried far through the silence, and seeing, all about, the winking lights of the fires outside the shacks and tepees. In a trail they passed an old Indian, bent double, and stumbling over the snow by help of a stick. His tall son strode beside him, dragging a hand-sled, and both greeted the Policemen with the frankness of men who know their friends. Tempest halted, speaking in his broken Cree-French.

"Is Tommy Joseph hunting this season, Selok?" he asked, and the old man groaned, swaying his shaggy head until the white hair covered his face.

The son looked his disapproval. Tommy Joseph was own brother to him, but that was no reason why his father should show emotion.

"Him seeck away to Chipewyan," he said. "Go die soon, me t'ink."

"What made him sick?" asked Tempest, and the old man groaned again.

"Him chase Job Kesikaw in canoe. Git in brulé upset. Too col'. Seek in 'tomach. Goo'bye."

"Where is Job Kesikaw?" asked Dick idly.

"No can tell. Some place roun' 'bout." The young man spread his hands to the universe. "No talk wit' heem."

Lights grew closer as they followed the winding trail. In all that great Reserve where each of the wild men can live his own wild life unmolested if he so desire, there were some who desired the contact of their fellows, making a scattered village, built without method or meaning of any sort, along the throat of a coulée where little running streams gave water in the summer and the high walls made a natural corral for the horses. Out of the dark, away from the distant blinking lights that spelt homes, Dick and Tempest rode up the coulée where the knots of shacks and tepees thickened; where the half-savage dogs swarmed noisily around them, and the camp-fires were big and lurid, shooting tongues of flame against the sky.

Men were here in numbers; smoking lazily about the fires, or working until the busy women round the pots and the spits, where meat sizzled, should call them to feed. Children ran about clad in furs or in the thick long-trousered or long-frocked garments from Miss Chubb's bale-room. One fat yellow-brown urchin, in a skin shirt and scanty drawers, anchored by one suspender, stood sheer in the firelight and

spat at them. A hand of correction reached out of the dark, and withdrew him bodily, and after-sounds told that reproof had not stopped there. The men of the North-West Mounted Police understood that they were herewith greeted as friends.

On the Grey Wolf Reserve were chiefly Crees and Beavers who accepted the white man's protection and took Treaty payments to prove it. But there were some breeds also who had reverted to the call of the Indian blood which was in them, and it was among the latter that Job Kesikaw was rated. In the eternally-shifting crowds along the river-ways Dick and Tempest had probably seen Job more than once; but he was one of the weed-rack of earth, drifting ever.

"And I've never located him yet," said Dick to his brain, and ran his quick eye round the half-seen groups. "And I fancy the description I've got from old The-Back-of-To-morrow won't help me at all."

He went over that description internally. It suggested Job as a stocky, clumsy man of middle height; bull-necked and bull-strong; sinewed like a wolf, and with the eyes of a wolf; dark as the earth where the moss grows, and cunning, and greasily fat.

There were at least ten men within sight who filled that picture, line on line. One was lacing the corded sinews through a half-made snowshoe with his heavy face intent on the crossing of each mesh. Two more, on their knees by the fire, were charring lengths of pliant green wood into the angle of sled-runners. Yet another sliced a raw moose-hide into slender strips for tie or snowshoe thongs. Sheer in the fire-glow a young muscular breed was pegging out the skin of a wolverine on a flat board. He grinned at Dick in swift delight.

"Huh! You Carcajou," he said. "You no git you man kill, is it not?"

Dick recognised this reference to Robison whom a severe attack of pneumonia had so far salvaged from the gallows. He slid out of the saddle, and shook hands with the breed cheerfully.

"Aha," he said. "Him gone sick. But by-an'-bye him get well again. Then they punish him down in Fort Saskatchewan, Beaver Tail."

He was looking on the other men as he spoke, and across the face of he who sliced the moose-hide he saw fear flicker and darken. An almost imperceptible motion of his hand brought Tempest to the ground also, and then Dick went on with his salutations.

Many of the men were known to him, and he shook hands with each, asking the names of those he did not know. The breeds were laughing, entering into the game with the joyousness of children, and at the cooking-fires where the smell

of meat was thick and warm, women halted in their labours, watching the two clean-run white men in their close uniforms with admiring curiosity.

Dick stopped before the man whose hands were red and greasy with the hide.

"I guess I'm the friend of all here," he said, and held his hand out. "But I don't know your name, my friend."

Someone piped it out. And then Job Kesikaw, thrusting out his paw reluctantly, felt himself seized in a sudden trap-like grip, and heard the new note in Dick's voice.

"I want you, Job Kesikaw," he said, and Job sprang back, jerking free with the full weight of his body.

Dick's grasp was strong; but the greasy hand slid from it. Job turned and dived into the darkness, whipping up his rifle as he fled. And into the dark, close on his heels, leapt Dick and Tempest.

"Wah! Wah!" said Beaver Tail, astonished and interested. The men around him grunted; looked at each other doubtfully for a little space, and then fell to their work again.

Principally they were amazed at the audacity of Job in defying the Big Law. Partly they were amused and contemptuous; and partly, in virtuous knowledge of their own presumably clean sheets, they arraigned him mercilessly in that he had brought himself under the terror of that law.

"Him done some dam follishness, me s'pose," said Beaver Tail, laying the pegged skin aside. "Huh! What him want run from Carcajou, anyway? T'ink him no catch? Huh!"

"Huh!" said the chorus of derision out of the dark, and appeared to lose outward interest in the fate of Job.

Ahead of the two men, through the forest, Job's progress seemed to make the dark roar with sound. Sticks snapped, and crashed; branches whipped back as the great body hurled itself through them and the white men followed; catching the slashing twigs across their faces; stabbed by a broken stick; stumbling, jumping, climbing, pushing ever through the tangling growth, burst apart by the man ahead, and clogged by the soft snow.

Job was evilly fat and short of wind. The white men were muscle-hard and lean with the strenuous work of the summer. Job heard them gaining, and in a clearing where the white moon-light was sharp on the white ground, he halted, turned, and flung his rifle up. Dick heard the bullet whistle as he ducked, still running. He heard the trigger click again; and then Tempest's weight bore on him, swinging him aside, and Tempest fired, even in the moment when he fell.

Dick had no time to understand that Tempest had possibly given one life to save the other. He scrambled up, feeling the sandy snow grit in his ungloved hands, and rushed in on

Job without taking breath. Job's trigger-arm swung loose from the elbow, and Dick was glad. He looked on the big man sitting in the snow and crying like a frightened baby, and then he looked on the other man lying still in the moonlight.

"I fancy you'll wait till I'm ready to strap that," he said, and ran over to Tempest's side.

How or when he knew it he could not tell. But he understood why Tempest had taken the bullet which should have been his. Tempest knew this thing which Dick had done to him; and because Dick had exacted the sacrifice of his love, Tempest, following Biblical methods, had offered his life also. Not even in the first moment did he do Tempest the dishonour of thinking that he had sought a way for himself out of his trouble. He knew the spirit of the man too well for that. And he knew also that, if Tempest lived, the thing which he had to say to him was going to be infinitely more terrible than he had expected it to be.

There was blood on Tempest's face and in his hair. Dick wiped it off and found the bullet-graze on the temple which had stunned him. He sat back with a breath of relief and pulled out his flask. It was empty, as it had been too many times of late, and Dick felt the burn of shame as he tilted it. Tempest had no flask, and so Dick flung snow over the still face; softening it first by the warmth of his hands. Presently Tempest shivered, feeling the icy air strike into him. Across the snow Job was wailing and shuddering with chattering teeth. Then Tempest sat up with Dick's aid; sick and giddy, and stupidly feeling the blood that ran on his face. He seemed fully as ashamed as Dick himself of the thing which he had done; and, by consent, both ignored causes and spoke only of effects as Dick washed the skin round the wound and bound it up with torn handkerchiefs. He had to use a piece of his shirt when he came to Job, and the man wept aloud at the stout and effective tournaquet, and at the winding of the broken limb into a hastily-stripped cradle of birch-bark.

"I guess you've lost enough blood to cool that courage of yours," remarked Dick, dragging him up to his feet. "Now show us the way back to camp. You should know these trails better than I do."

Both Dick's patients were staggering with weakness when they reached the camp, and it was an hour later when they took the trail to Grey Wolf; Tempest riding a little behind, silent, and somewhat giddy still, and Dick two yards ahead, with Job Kesikaw on the lame Indian pony at his knee. The moon was gone, but, for the first time in several months, the Northern Lights pulsed in the sky, in long direct streamers, lividly-blue and pure. They hung the forest-trees with a dim, unearthly sheen, and in the light of it Dick saw the night

animals pass and pass again, without sound. There was little pleasure to Dick in that ride home. He was thinking grimly of what would have to be said on the morrow. But over Tempest a curious hush and a deep content had descended. He could forgive now. He could forgive, because he had given Dick's life back to him, and in so doing he had given him all else.

Cheerfully, with eyes bright and head up, he rode home. For with all his strength and love he was fitting himself to bring that offering which the other man—having demanded and obtained of him—must throw away.

CHAPTER XII.

"THE THIEF ON THE LEFT."

"DICK!"

Tempest called from his bedroom; the little room behind the little sitting-room which Dick had seldom entered. But Dick came to the door now, standing still, with his lips drawn into a peculiar smile.

"Well?" he said, and Tempest turned from the dressing-table.

"Come in, and shut the door, old man," he said. And Dick came in. His chance to explain this matter, convincingly and pleasantly, was for now.

Except for a square of black plaister above the sunburnt line across his temple, Tempest showed no signs of last night's happenings. His voice was warm and strong, and his eyes smiled.

"You've had a busy day," he said. "But I haven't been idle, either. About half a dozen fellows have come in for moral support of some kind."

"Yes? You will always find plenty who will tie up to you for repairs."

"Except you." Tempest shifted the brushes on the dressing-table slowly. "You've gone your own pernicious way, you old sinner, while—if you'd had the honesty to speak to me, there'd have been no need for—all this."

Even the cynicism ingrained in him could not help Dick just now. He loved Tempest too well.

"I had forgotten that men expected honesty from me," he said. "What is it?"

"Andree has told me," said Tempest quietly. "That was enough. And I saw those paintings of yours if I had needed more proof. I could have wished you hadn't done them. But you probably didn't guess that they would be made public. She's not mine to give up, now. But I want you to know that if she was I could give her up to you, Dick. Only—for God's sake take care of her, for she doesn't know the meaning of life yet."

His voice was low and steady. The ring of it told Dick that Tempest had turned his face to the heights again, and that it was for himself to call the man back into a hell which he did not care to think of.

"You've put up a good fight," said Tempest, and he suddenly lifted his eyes and smiled. "Don't think I haven't noticed what you've looked like lately. But nature has been too strong for you both—and all a man in my position can do is to give way gracefully. I hope I can do that. I've got my work—and I've got my friend. So you can go into action with a clear conscience, old man," he added, and held his hand out.

Dick did not take it. He backed away with his face white.

"You're all wrong," he said slowly. "I don't want her."

Tempest's eyes were shining and over his whole body glowed that something which made Dick remember the idiotic girl and the Sun-treader.

"There's no need of lies between you and I, Dick," he said gently.

"It is not a lie." Dick moistened his lips and flung out the words savagely. "She was ruining your life and she had to come out of it. So I took her out of it. You'll never get her again. But I don't want her. I never did want her. But she was ruining you."

The bald brutality of each word struck him as he spoke it. But the thing had to be said, and no words conceived by man could soften it. And therefore he did not try. Tempest looked at him. His face was blank, like that of a man in sleep.

"Will you please say that again—all of it?" he said slowly.

Dick said it again. He said it in the same words because they seemed to ring in the air yet. And besides, there were no others. Tempest gave a little sigh. His hand strayed among the brushes on the dressing-table.

"I'm afraid I don't understand," he said. "There's no need for this. I have told you that I don't mean to be a barrier to your marriage."

"I am not going to marry her," said Dick.

The life came back to Tempest's face in one white terrible flash.

"What do you mean by that?" he said.

"What I say. She is not fit for you. I told you so long ago. Now I have proved it."

"Proved it?"

"She is—nothing," said Dick. "I could do what I liked with her. So could any man who took the trouble to flatter her. She is—just that!"

He snapped his fingers, looking straight at the man opposite. This was not at all the way in which he had meant to speak.

But softer words were too foreign to him. They would not come.

"You say you have proved it." Tempest's mind travelled slowly through this blinding fire. "How have you proved it?"

"Before God, Tempest——"

"Leave God out. How have you proved it?"

"I have flattered her. That was bait enough to take her from you. She never loved you, and she doesn't love me. She loves nothing but her own selfish body—she hasn't got a soul."

"You said you could do what you liked with her. What have you liked to do?"

The tone was perfectly level, but there was a thread in it which thrilled Dick. Had he saved this soul for which he had soiled his own, or were they both going down presently together into the night?

"I have kissed her," said Dick. "That is all. I didn't care to do more or I could have done it."

"You didn't care to do more." Tempest looked away at the glass; did not seem to recognise the face reflected there, and looked away again. "Why did you not care to do more?" he asked.

Dick's self-control was breaking.

"Because I'm not such a brute as you try to make me out," he said. "I meant to save you. That's why."

"To save me?" Tempest's laugh was a queer little catch in the throat. "To *save* me!"

"She has broken up other men before she ever saw you, and she will keep on doing it. Once you're free of her and see her as other men see her——"

"You mean—as men like you have caused other men to see her!"

The white flame leapt out in Tempest's voice for an instant. Then it died. Dick breathed unevenly. Tempest said:

"What had she done to you?"

"I tell you she was spoiling your——"

"That was my affair. What had the child done to you that you should do this to her?"

The ring of pain in the words turned Dick weak for a breath. This man was treading where he could never follow. The insult to himself; the cold brutality of deed and word; the reason which now seemed no more than impertinent interference—Tempest had passed them all by in his protecting thought for Andree.

"I have done nothing to her." Dick's voice was low. "One could not hurt her except physically."

For a little space Tempest was silent. But Dick felt the force gathering behind that silence. He looked at the photographs of Tempest's mother and sisters on the wall, and at the

picture of Tempest's old home in Ontario where he had spent so many holidays in his boyhood.

"She loves you," said Tempest at last. "Won't you take that into account, and remember her needs?"

"Your own love has blinded you there, Tempest. She does not love me. She is incapable of love. And she does not matter. It is only you who matter."

"She loves you. And you have taken the guarding of her life out of my hands into your own. There is no god nor devil can make you anything but responsible for that. At the first I think she could have cared—but perhaps you were at work even then. What are you going to do about it now?"

Dick moistened his lips. Fury, such as was common to most men occasionally, which could expend itself in word and movement, was an infinitely lesser thing than this terrible stillness.

"I am not going to do anything. There is nothing to do. I have done too much, and I am not here to excuse myself. But it was necessary——"

"She has no one. And she does love you. Do you think I could mistake there? Won't you have mercy on her because of that?"

He was pleading for a soul dearer to him than his own. Dick knew it; and knew too how that proud self which Tempest was now trampling in the dust would wake presently to recognise its hurt.

"I can have no more mercy on her than to leave her alone. I give you my word that I will do that. But I can't do more. If I could make you understand that it had to be done because you were ruining your life——"

Tempest's face was rigid, even to the eyes.

"What is that to you?" he said. "You who ruined your own life long ago? What has my life to do with you? How dared *you* interfere with my life?"

"Because I cared for you——"

"You liar!" Tempest's low level tones did not change. "You did it because you cared for your own amusement. You did it because, as I was your friend, you knew that you could have your fun and I would never suspect. You did it because you do not know how to live an honest and honourable life. And then you shield yourself behind me. What has my life to do with you? I am responsible to my God for it—not to you."

He stood very still, with his hand on the table, and his eyes never left Dick's face. Dick was whiter than Tempest, because there was no anger in him to harden him; only a deep grief for himself and fo this man.

"Your life means a great deal to me, Tempest. And to Canada——"

"Ah? To Canada also?" The little sneer was not like Tempest. "That is complimentary, perhaps, but not convincing."

"Upon my honour——"

"Again complimentary, but not convincing," said Tempest.

This stung Dick into action. He moved forward a step, and the colour came back to his face.

"Whether you like or don't like," he said, "you shall hear me now. You shall hear what I've got to say, and, by God, you won't forget it. For I'm speaking truth, and you will know it's truth. I have never taken the stand among men that you have. I did not want to, if I could have done it. But you have chosen to stand where you do stand in the eyes of the world. You have chosen to be known in the Force and far beyond it as a man whose judgment and whose word and whose advice should be trusted. You have chosen that men should know your opinions and should know that you walked by them. You were not afraid of being judged. Perhaps you sometimes invited judgment. Can you deny that?"

Tempest did not attempt to. His face had not changed.

"And do you see what you are doing now? You who allowed yourself to be considered as an example? Do you see what you have done now that you have put your name in the mouth of every man as the name of one who is eager and willing to sink all his ideals, all the weight of his influence, all his power for the gratification of what he knows to be the lower—the lowest part of his nature."

Tempest's lips moved, but no sound came from them. His face was changing now.

"You do know it!" Dick hurled the words at him. "And you shall surely know what you have done. You are committing one of the deadliest of sins, because you can't fall without dragging down all those whom you have allowed to believe in you. You can't fall without defiling all that truth and honour and virtue which you have chosen to make yourself the exponent of. You chose to take a high place—I don't say you were not fit for it. You were. But you can't leave that place without disgrace to more than yourself. You have chosen to wield a great influence, and now you are choosing to betray it. You say you are responsible to your God. What is your God going to say about it? The virtues that you are making a bonfire of are popularly supposed to belong to Him in the first place, aren't they?"

He stopped, but Tempest made no sound, no movement. He was not looking at Dick now. His eyes went straight past to the window, but Dick knew that he was looking at himself. A wave of remorse swept over Dick. He was never hurt by

the roughest handling. But Tempest was of such different material.

"Tempest——"

Tempest's glance brushed across his for a moment. There was no expression in it.

"You can go," he said.

"Tempest, for God's sake don't——"

"Leave God out," said Tempest. "I told you that before. And go. I told you that too."

Dick went. He was scarcely through the door when he heard Tempest spring to it and lock it. And then there came no other sound at all, although he listened for a long, long while.

Tempest had dropped into a chair, folding his arms on the back, and his face was hidden on his arm. No part of him seemed alive but his brain, and that was making vivid blazing realities which seemed to fill up earth and sky. It was true. All that Dick had said to him was true. He had that influence. He was wielding it daily. He could not lose it. What was he doing with it? God in Heaven, what was he doing with it? What was he doing with that gospel of work and religion and duty which he had called men to hear him preach? What was he doing with it—he who stood for the high standard which he had set; for the moral and physical power by which men knew him: he who had not hesitated to stand in his own small corner for Canada herself?

He knew what he was doing with it. Now that Dick had told him he knew, and the sweat came out on his body as he recognised it. In so far as the human can do it he was making a mock of God Himself. He—Tempest! And now God and love and truth had made a mock of him. He cowered lower over his chair, and he stayed there, scarcely moving, until the sounds of day came into the world beyond the door again.

That night was an uneasy one for Dick also. He rose early and went down to the yard where a half-packed sled stood with the dog-harness slung across it. Silently he hauled his little tent from where it hung in the wood-shed and beat and folded it into shape for packing. There was a stern-chase on a week-old trail before him, and he was glad of it. From all the troubles of his life heretofore he had been able to escape down the windy trails of the world. But this time he would not leave all which he had done behind him.

The sure, sturdy note of winter was sounding along the land when he and the young breed pulled out that day, heading straight into space, with only a few tangled clues to guide them. The keen air tingled the blood of the forest-men; making them restless with the fret of it; restless for the cry of the trapped animal and for the snow-laid trails and the bite of the forest on their faces. The young breed opened his

nostrils to the snow-tang as he swung along, and his bright eyes roved. Even as to the other man these wild rimless woods were his home; and he laughed and swore cheerfully as he fed the thawed fish to the dogs for their evening meal, and came back to the fire, grinning still, and rubbing his hands.

"Voila," he said gaily. "Mais dat vilain Poley kip dem sharp set. Dey do wolf deir viande."

"Nothing works well when it is too fat. I shall have to thin you down, Passepartout, I think."

"Donc! It is to laugh mak' me fat." He threw out a great bellow from his chest. "No one can help dat," he said.

"Don't try," advised Dick. "Everything in this world really is funny, isn't it? Even those things which a man might not think could be funny."

"Eh, bien! Good enough. Dere is toujours de fun an' dere is toujours de nouvelle. When a man tire of one t'ing, dere is de nex' place to trap, an' de nex' girl to like, an' de nex' man to hit if so he wan' to hit. Dere is plenty tout le temps."

"Ah! That is a very good philosophy, Passapartout." Dick looked up at the bulky grinning young fellow in the firelight. "All things are new so long as the man himself is new. But what happens when he gets stale?"

"Je ne sais pas. Him like bad fish, I s'pose. Feed him to de dog."

"Oh! Feed him to the dog?" Dick revolved this in silence for a minute. "I fancy you have hit a greater truth than you think, Passepartout. Throw some more wood on, and rake those smoking branches in. And then you can go to sleep as soon as you like."

Passepartout retired into his wolf-skin robe even as Dick retired into his thoughts and smoked. And those thoughts were not entirely bitter. He was too much of a born tramp, a born rover, not to feel the exhilaration of his surroundings; of the widespread brooding hush of the forest; the heavy dark branches against the stars; the crisp, white snow about him and the smell of the resinous burning wood. He had turned many pages of Life's book in his time, and he was not tired of turning them yet. The impossibility of turning more, even though they had all been for evil, would have been the only thing which could have really broken the restless heart in him.

Almost at the moment when he gave that stunning blow to Tempest it had interested him to find out how the man would stand under it. It had interested him to find that he himself could speak so clearly and convincingly on a matter which had no personal meaning for him except in so far as it affected Tempest. It interested him now to wonder if there was any truth in Tempest's idea that Andree loved him, and it interested

him quite a good deal to wonder what he should do if there was. To examine and observe and dissect everything, even his own soul and the souls of those he loved best—this was what had come to him out of his desire to see life clearly. But because he had to examine them all through the lens of his own mind what he saw was necessarily distorted.

His very love and reverence for Jennifer were spoiled by the belief that she would give way in the end. Her creeds would not be proof against her love, any more than Tempest's had been. By and by she would let his hand break the thing which she had said was herself—the self he loved. And fiercely though he wanted her now, how did he know that he would always want her? Change was the only thing which never tired him; the new was the only mate he always met with gladness; the elusive and the uncertain were the only loves he had ever wanted to hold and kiss. This wild creed which he had taught himself had done him no good. But he could not fling it aside. It did not seem possible now that Tempest could ever give way to a newer friend; Jennifer to a newer love. And yet such things had been his experience all through life. Constancy is more an ingrained habit than a natural virtue, and Dick had never cultivated habits.

He kicked the fire together, and re-lit his pipe. Okimow, lying near his feet, looked up, then buried his nose in his paws again with a snort of comfort. That half-smile in the man's eyes had meant nothing to him. Because he had no soul he could not laugh at the fears and aspirations of that soul.

And yet Dick was not altogether indifferent concerning the uniform he wore and the country which he served. After all, it was the land which had bred him; the land which his gay, daring forefathers had won for him, paying lightly and unregretfully with the price of their lives. And this work which he was doing would have appealed to them too. This work of guarding a young and empty land into which alien races were constantly pouring: races which knew strange gods and practised strange customs; races which became naturalised by a swift system which they understood in the letter only, and which accepted responsibilities which they many times had neither the wit nor the knowledge to understand.

He realised quite certainly that it was for the men born of Canada to help her aliens through with their unhandy fingering of a life that was new and strange. And, in chief, it was for those men on whom had been laid the charge of bearing the law of the English across and across the solitudes; sowing the loneliness thick with it, so that, wherever the feet of the newcome wanderer might tread, there he should find it waiting

him. Waiting on the river sands where the prospector bores for oil among the spores of the wolf and the bear. Waiting on the blowing blue-joint grass-lands where the coyote wakes the far hollow echoes, and in the settler's little log shack the business of life and of death goes forward. Waiting for the communities which bunch together on the selections, and weaning them from their unlawful ways, so that they should not breed up plague-spots to inoculate East and West.

And it waits for the lonely Indian, that law, guarding him along his silent trails ; for the breed, weakened and demoralised by his contact with the white man who recognises no duty towards his brother ; for the new lives yet to be : the strange, wonderful medley of lives out of which is to be fused the still untabulated race which will produce the Canadian of the future. It waits for them all ; held grimly, firmly in its place by the untiring hands and the unflagging souls of the few, the very few, who prove worthy of their trust until the end.

Dick felt a thrill of pleasure at the thought that he had given Tempest back to that service. For, as he had not broken Tempest outwardly, so he could not believe that he had broken him inwardly. At seeing the bare future before him another man might fling himself into despairing sin. But not Tempest. The training of a whole life could not fail when once the man's eyes were opened. It surely could not fail. But even as he said it Dick felt the doubt come. Dared man say that anything was sure ? And if it was, what made it so ? Not the shifting sand of man's own heart ; not the vagrant wind-puffs of his desires ; not the trembling marsh-flames of his beliefs. Then, since there was nothing beyond or above man, it followed that nothing was sure. Tempest might fall into a deeper pit than that from which Dick had pulled him. Jennifer might give the lips which she had denied him to another man. For, since man's stability was the author and the core of all the virtues, how could he, a man, say that they were sure ?

Dry powdery flakes of snow drifted down through the dark canopy, hissing softly on the fire, and Dick rolled into his tent, forgetting past certainties and future possibilities in sleep. And after that he thrust, day by day, further into the forest which made a mighty sounding-board for the least noise and a mighty haven for his restless spirit. It was a long chase and a hard one, and seven weeks and over had gone by before he brought his man back ; a little leaner, perhaps, a little harder in the muscles, and a very great deal lighter of heart. For the straight, honest work had done for him what it is intended to do for all men ; it had drawn the restless evil out of him and it had given him back sanity and peace and an honest contentment. He was strong enough now to stand up to the battle

that life might hold for him at Grey Wolf. He was strong enough to meet its temptations.

He told himself that even if Andree had not forgotten him for a newer lover she could not trouble him now. Even if Tempest had not forgiven he could yield Tempest obedience and love again. The great hand of discipline, hourly bodily discipline, had been heavy on him through these six weeks, and he felt the benefit of it. He found a merry satisfaction in being ruled by his own choice, this man who could not rule himself.

Tempest heard them coming down the street one afternoon, with Passepartout singing at the top of his sturdy lungs that tenderest and best-known little love-song of the voyageurmen, and he leaned from the window, listening.

"A la claire fontaine,
M'en allant promener,
J'ai trouver l' eau si belle
Que je me suis baigné,"

sang Passepartout, ending with a wild " H-r-r-r-rup," as he swung his dogs into the yard. Dick followed with the handsome, sullen Greek beside him. The man had evidently shown fight, for he was handcuffed to a strap on Dick's belt. Tempest smiled as Dick halted the Greek in the yard and spoke to him with that half-idle levity which nevertheless masked a sharp cunning equal to that of his namesake, the wolverine. The Greek was not fully awake to it yet, for he made an abortive attempt to escape ; and then Tempest saw how, quick as light, Dick caught the man by the elbows, ran him across the yard, and twisted him into a cell. After that he pulled down his tunic, and Tempest saw him nod and laugh as Kennedy came out and spoke to him.

Tempest drew back nervously. Dick would be coming in to make his report directly. He was coming now, and Tempest's heart beat unevenly as Dick followed his knock into the room, and gave his report succinctly, coldly erect and official as Tempest himself. There was a little pause when he had done. There was a moment when both men desired to break the barrier down. But the moment passed ; killed by the strength of that desire, and Dick went out, leaving Tempest to settle back to his work.

These seven weeks had been harder for Tempest than for Dick. But they had done him good, too. No word of removal had come for him yet ; and here, where he had fallen, he had to take his stand again with all the spirit and the force that were left to him. Meals in Grange's big dining-room with Andree to wait on him were one of the hardest things to

face. Yet he faced them from the first, showing himself no more mercy than Dick had shown him. But the eager glow on Andree's skin when Dick's name was spoken was a thing which he could not steel himself against. He knew that she was counting the hours when this new-found love of hers could claim its own. And he knew, too, that it would be known all along the rivers that Dick had taken Andree from him, and that the speculations would be many regarding what the Inspector would do. This last was torment to his sensitive soul, and at first he winced from every new pair of eyes that met his. But that also was conquered as time went by.

And then he began to realise what he owed the man who had turned him back to his duty again; who, even in this suffering and struggle, had given him back a peace which he had missed during those months when he ceased to struggle. He recognised that he had had no right to impute an unworthy motive to this thing which Dick had done. Dick was too weak in many ways and too strong in others. He had been ill-judged, cruel, selfish; but he was not a liar. With Tempest's help it might happen that this matter would not fall so heavily on Andree as he had feared. Love can be overcome; was he not learning that for himself? And the old friendship could be retained, if God willed.

When Dick had left him he sat for a little, looking on the papers which Dick had brought. The very ring of the man's step, the very sound of his voice had been pain. But there was love mixed with the pain. Bonds formed in early heat of manhood are not easily broken, and those bonds had been many once. He smiled, taking up his pen. He was dining with the Leighs' to-night; but when he came back he would speak to Dick, and he believed that there was something in Dick's eyes which told that he would be glad of what Tempest had to say.

Dick went to sleep in the big chair in the mess-room that night, and he waked to the sound of soft sobbing and the feel of something wet on his hands and face. Drowsily he opened his eyes, and as he did so Grange's Andree ceased her tears and kisses where she knelt at his knee, and gathered up his right hand against her breast.

"Dick," she said. "Dick."

Just that, and her voice was very low. But Dick, looking into those wet wild-animal eyes of hers, knew that Tempest had spoken truth. By some mockery of the Devil he himself had brought to Andree the gift of a soul—that she might love him with it. For the moment he did not move. He watched her as she knelt there with her face upturned and her curls gathered into the nape of her neck, and he wondered idly what Tempest and some other men would have given to see that light in Andree's eyes. Her fur coat and cap lay on the floor,

and the glow of the outside cold was on her skin. She drew his hand across her heart, and her voice shook a little.

"I did think it would stop, moi," she said. "It was si longtemps to wait."

He did not move his eyes from her. He knew too much to doubt the look in her eyes or the leap of her heart under his hand. There was bitterness and there was anger in the faint smile on his lips. This was not fair. Why should this girl who might have loved plenty of men, Heaven knew, choose him? He was not even flattered. The thing had been too simple. He was injured. Fate seldom neglected to make him pay promptly for his sins—and this had not been all his own fault. He sat up, pushing her gently back.

"Come, Andree," he said. "You have no right here, you know."

"Comment donc!" said Andree, and laughed softly. "I have the right to come to you." She brought her warm, brilliant-tinted face close. "Make not coquette contre moi to-night, Dick," she said. "Leave that so small thing for a woman."

Dick winced involuntarily. This thing which he would have to do was so pitiably small that it was going to take him all his powers to go through with it. For Grange's Andree would not be bound by any of the ordinary conventions which rule women. She was leaning on him, laughing, and holding his hand against her with those two long slender ones of hers. And her dark eyes held the light of all the stars.

"I did kiss you and kiss you till I did kiss you awake," she said gleefully. "I did never think it so nice to kiss before —except Moosta's babies. But you are much more better than Moosta's babies, Dick."

Dick would have known how to meet other women in like case. It was possible that he had had practice. But he was unsure with Grange's Andree.

"Thank you, Andree. But you must not kiss me any more."

"Pourquoi?"

"Because—well, because we have finished the game we were playing, my dear. It was just un petit brin de cour, Andree. Didn't you know that?"

She hated him to use French to her. It reminded her of her breed-like limitation, and he knew it.

"A flirtation," she said slowly. "A flirtation. Bien! C'est bon assez. Kiss me, Dick."

She put her lips up, but he did not meet them. While those kisses meant nothing to her he had not considered that they mattered. He looked at her with his eyes dark, and something woke in him that had not troubled him for years. He fought it impatiently for a moment. Then he obeyed it.

"No," he said, and pushed his chair back, and stood up. "I shall never kiss you any more, Andree. Get up and go home."

She came to her feet in one little movement, standing still with her hands hanging.

"I do not understand," she said. "You did make my pictures. And you did say 'je t'aime,' and you did kiss me—so many times." She paused, with her straight brows knotted. She was moved beyond her English, and yet she dimly felt that it brought her more to the level of the man. "Since you did go—I think I have perhaps not make very happy. I feel I want you come back. I think of you tout le—all times. I not want to be touch. I slap Jimmy when he put his arm round me. He say, 'Why you slap?' I say, 'I not know.' It is you would know, I s'pose. You make it so."

She stood very still, looking at him with innocent, appealing eyes. He walked through the little room restlessly. Yes, he knew. But that did not seem likely to simplify the matter in the very least. Then he turned to her, making his first cowardly step of retreat.

"You must understand that it is not customary for a girl to come and talk like this to a man, my dear," he said. "It was faire jouer only. You have no right to think more of it."

"But I have all the right," said Andree gravely. "I feel it here—in my coeur—my—my top 'tomick."

"Then I had no right to give you the right. Forget it."

"Mais—what do that mean?"

His face looked drawn and dark. The slight smile on his lips was bitter. He hated himself for the part he must play. And yet there was no way out but the one. If he could rouse the wild animal fury in her it would be easier to meet than this attitude which stirred his pity. But he hesitated before open brutality to a woman. Then he said:

"It means that I am tired of you. It means that I have treated you as you have treated plenty of men, Grange's Andree."

"Then—what make me feel—*so*—for you?" she asked.

"The Devil knows. He has had a fairly large share in this business all through."

"*But*," cried Andree, in the tone of one suddenly awakened. "*But* I *want* you. That make you want me because I want you."

"Not by chalks. How about Tempest?"

"But—it is me—*me* who want *you*," insisted Andree; and then Dick laughed, laying his arms on the back of the big chair, and looking at her with tired, wise eyes.

"It takes a woman to get down to the personal view," he

said. "You're primitive, Andree. I always said so. But I didn't guess at this when I started out. I would beg your pardon; but I know better than to try to pay my debts with a five-cent bit. Let it go at that. If I've hurt you I assure you that you've got the goods on me right now."

She drew a long breath through her teeth.

"Is it like when I would go from Tempest and I was afraid?" she asked.

"Ab-solutely."

"And when Robison said about love, and I did nearly hit him, and did not hit just because?"

"Oh, Lord. Yes!"

"And—and like when Ogil——"

"Andree, I fancy you know enough. We are neither making our maiden attempt, are we? Let up on me, Andree, and watch out for another fellow who's looking for trouble. I give you the whole world so long as you leave Tempest alone."

"But," said Andree convincingly, "it is not like any of these, because it is I who love you. Do you see?"

Dick shrugged his shoulders.

"If a man pays his debts fully here there is a reasonable hope that he may go free hereafter," he said. "Andree, it is exactly like them all because I don't love you any more than you loved them."

That went home. He saw her wince. But still she could not believe.

"But—qu'est-ce que I have done to you?" she asked.

Dick knew that she had not the wit to follow a line of reasoning out. She just sought the why as a beaten dog might have done. But that did not ease matters. He evaded direct answer.

"To-night you have done a good deal," he said. "I give you my word that a man does not enjoy feeling as you have made me feel to-night."

"But what have I done to you?" Suddenly she flung herself into the chair-seat, reaching up her hands to his shoulders. Her eyes were frightened, but wistful with their great love. "What have I done to you?" she said again. "Tell me, et si vous faché contre moi I will undo it."

"I am not angry. But you can't undo it, and neither can I."

The cynical smile twitched his lips again. "The trouble began when you were made a woman and I was made a man, Andree."

"But I did not mean to be," she said, not understanding.

"No." He looked at her with his eyes half-closed as when he was painting her. "No; it would have been better not to be, wouldn't it? The Power which created you will owe you a good deal at settling-up time, Grange's Andree."

"Ah!" she said impatiently. "I do not understand. Kiss me, Dick. You did not never wait so long before."

"You hit very straight for a woman, my dear girl. But I am not going to kiss you any more, Andree, because, having hurt you quite considerably I have to keep on hurting you in order to regain my self-respect. Does that sound funny to you? It sounds equally funny to me. Very nearly funny enough to make one laugh. But I can assure you that it is according to the ordinary rules of the game."

"Dieu! You make so much talk! And I do not understand." She pushed her face close to his. "Put your hands on my face and kiss me, Dick. That I do understand."

"Yes, you do, Heaven help you. We have made sure of that."

He freed himself from her clutching hands and picked up her cap and coat.

"Put these on and go home, Andree," he said. "It's getting late."

She sprang upright in one bound; her hands gripped up, her eyes blazing.

He shrugged his shoulders and turned to meet her.

"Now we are going to have it," he said.

A moment she stood so; battling with the great sobs that were shaking her. Then she hurled herself forward on her knees with her arms round him in what would have been melodrama in another woman but was pure natural abandonment in Grange's Andree.

"Put your hand on to me," she sobbed. "Put your hand—an' say you love me. Dick! Dick! Not to make me go like this. Not to be cruel—all in one togezzer. Dick—it make me kill some place inside."

Apart from the real pity and shame in him his natural instinct for analysis was awake. He had not dreamed that there was anything in the girl which could suffer like this. She clung to him, hiding her face against him, and she shook them both with her wild sobbing. He drew a hard breath, standing quite still, and looking at this thing as his mind showed it.

It was inevitable that he should break Andree here, because Andree stood for the primitive, the savage; for the primal thing which has to be done away with before the march of progress. She was the Canada of the unformed, the undisciplined, the uncivilised. And, being so, she had to make way for the needs and desires of the white man who peoples the world in the place of the native-born. For always, over the face of the earth, go the white men; fulfilling their destiny; destroying the lesser within or without the law; taking that which they can never replace; but obeying, even as the lesser animal obeys, that great merciless inscrutable Power which

has made of the white race rulers, founders, destroyers; the builders-up of new dynasties; the devourers of the old.

Tempest stood for the new dynasty; for the race of the future; for a link in the long chain wherewith the white man buckles the earth to himself. And Andree stood for the old dynasty; the thing which must die; the thing to be trodden hard that the roots of the new-planted tree should stand firm in it. This was the law of life; the law of eternity. It was the ever-mutable Now out of which the Future is shaped. All mankind were governed alike by that law. There was no escape. But, with those young arms gripped about him, Dick did not feel competent to lay the whole blame on the natural evolution of destiny.

Andree drew herself up against him; lifting her quivering lips.

"Not to love me, perhaps," she said. "But to let me stay. To put your hand on me. Not to stand—*so*. Dick, make your eyes kind to me again."

He took her arms and lifted her away resolutely.

"My dear girl," he said, "don't you think we've had enough of this? You don't expect me to change my mind once I've said a thing, do you?"

Then the savage roused in her. She charged him, with head down and hands clawing and white teeth snapping. The onslaught all but upset him, for he was unprepared, and for a few moments he needed to put out all his strength to master her. He had her by the wrists at last, and they faced each other; tall, straight and breathless, with white passionate faces and shut lips. Then, quite suddenly, Andree laughed.

"Dieu," she said. "You are the strong man. I think you might kill me."

"I wish I could," said Dick sincerely. Andree laughed again.

"I did never have done like you do to me," she said. "Even Robison he say, 'Cherie Andree. Bonne Andree.' Mais vous—! Voila! C'est tout le même devil in we two."

"Then you ought to know how to respect it. Will you go home?"

"Peste! I do not know." She looked at him in frank appreciation. At the brown, lean face—hard-fleshed, well-shaped, wind-tanned; at the set of the lips and the slightly-twitching thin nostrils; at the level eyes whence the pity was driven back. He was so entirely the man and the master that the animal simplicity in her obeyed him with actual pleasure in the obedience.

"Bien," she said, and glanced down at her wrists where his grip drove the colour from her skin. "Bien," she said again, and glanced up daringly to his face. "Kiss me now, Dick, and I will go."

She brought her mouth near. Her breath was sweet and milky as a cow's, and her red lips were parted like a child's. The storm had passed for the moment, but electricity was in the air yet. Dick felt it. And felt as he had felt before the intoxication of her beauty. And he let his lips stoop down to hers.

And then she flung her arms round his neck and so held him. And he did not hear when Tempest, coming back from the Leighs' evening party, walked down the passage, and opened the mess-room door. It was Andree who heard and saw and pulled free with a little cry. Dick did not look at Tempest. He put the girl into her cap and coat; pulled wide the outer door, and gave her good-night on the step. Then he turned coolly back into the room, with a simulation of indifference on him. His luck was surely surpassing itself to-night. Tempest's head was bare. But he still wore his fur coat, and his hands were gloved. Dick wondered for a moment if the man would hit him. But Tempest only said, very quietly:

"If she was not good enough for me, can it be possible that you consider her good enough for yourself, my friend?"

The words bit like acid, but Dick did not wince. His mouth drew down at the corners in the slight smile Tempest had always hated to see. There was no defence for this case, and he was not going to make any. Tempest's face changed. His eyes blazed suddenly, and he drew himself up to his full height: cold ringing steel, like the sword of justice unsheathed.

"I hold you responsible for her," he said. "I hold you responsible for her till the end of time."

Out of the miserable consciousness of his treachery Dick answered him.

"By what right?" he asked, and the sneer twisted his lips.

A moment more Tempest stood, unmoving. Then he seemed to crumble and weaken. He put his hand up to his face suddenly; turned, and stumbled out, and Dick saw his shoulders heaving. The door shut, and Dick sought in his pockets for his pipe, tried to fill it, and found that his hands would not serve him. He stood still, staring straight at the wall. There was no palliation for what he had done, and not for an instant did he attempt to find any. Vaguely, at the back of his head, two lines of some profane song were ringing:

> "And the thief on the left said never a word,
> For the son of a gun had sand."

Dick had offered no weak excuses. He had accepted his disgrace and stood up to it. But for the moment there was no relief in that. He spoke slowly, drawing a deep breath.

"He will never forgive himself for that," he said. "He will never forgive himself because he let me see him crying."

CHAPTER XIII.

"I WANT THE WEST AGAIN."

"MOTHER," cried Jennifer. "Slicker has been talking North-West all the afternoon, and I'm quite drunk with it."

"My dear child," said Jennifer's mother gently. "Please say inebriated;" and then Jennifer laughed, standing in the middle of the room and pushing back her hair into a ruddy glory round her bright face.

"What a darling you are," she said. "Isn't she, Slicker? Mother mine, if I go West again you'll have to come too——"

"But you don't want to go West again, dear."

"But I *do*. I awfully do. You know I always would begin everything at the beginning—even a book. And they are still beginning at the beginning out there. We'll go back, and drive the trails in a democrat, and be tracked in a York boat, and have half-breed servants who don't know the English for 'Hurry up,' and—for mercy's sake, Slicker! There are visitors! Fly! Fly! I wouldn't have anybody see you in that rig for a pension."

For the benefit of Jennifer's mother Slicker had robed himself in full glory of mooseskin coat, blue shirt and moccasins. He stood his ground now, impudent and delighted.

"Land of Liberty!" he said. "Give a fellow a show, honey. I'll knock 'em in these better than in any store-clothes ever sewn."

"Don't be vulgar." Jennifer was peeping through the curtains. "Oh, it is Mrs. Barrymore and Angela. They are darlings, and I wouldn't so much mind—but Mrs. Chichester is with them, and she's always looking for something to be scandalised about. Will you *go*, Slicker? Martha will be showing them in just in half a minute."

Slicker sat down.

"There's a meanness about you sometimes that I don't like, Jennifer," he remarked. "Why should you disappoint Mrs. Chichester? We are all meant to make life as pleasant as we can for others."

"If you think that you'll go. Oh—it's too late."

She went forward with her charming, half-shy grace of manner, and, quailing under the suppressed emotion of the three ladies in the door, weakly introduced Slicker as " my cousin. Just come from the North-West, you know."

It was the extremely pretty girl in the middle who disconcerted Slicker for at least five minutes, and Jennifer was human enough to find spiteful delight in the knowledge. But the little feminine flutter and stir and half-finished sentences before seats and tea were provided gave him his balance again. Six weeks ago Slicker had left Grey Wolf and come to Toronto to settle his business affairs with his uncle before joining the Police. His uncle had been displeased and had not troubled to conceal the fact. On the whole, Slicker considered that he rather obtruded it. Jennifer and her mother had been in New York, and to-day was Slicker's first chance for full appreciation and confidence. The advent of these three threatened to spoil it, and Slicker was bent on revenging himself accordingly.

Jennifer began to tremble when she saw that he attached himself unhesitatingly to Mrs. Chichester; bringing cake and tea, closing a window against the draught, and finally settling into the next chair with all the appearance of one who intends to be a fixture. Mrs. Chichester pinned him instantly under her lorgnette, and through Jennifer's conversation with the others she heard scraps of conversation which did not ease her mind.

" Why, no," said Slicker, in evident answer to some question. " I suppose I might rather call myself a missionary."

" Oh ! " Mrs. Chichester's voice was dubious. " I thought missionaries were—would not—but I infer you must follow the customs of the country ? "

" Oh, I hope not." The scandalised piety in Slicker's tone would have done credit to Mrs. Chichester herself. " Please don't mention the customs of the country, Mrs. Chichester."

" Why—you don't mean——"

Both voices dropped, and through the unheard conversation which followed Jennifer, as she told Slicker afterwards, " simply grilled." She broke it at last by coming across with her cup.

" I really must interrupt you," she said. " Mrs. Barrymore wants to speak to you, Slicker, and you have monopolised Mrs. Chichester quite long enough. Mrs. Barrymore is a member of the Woman's Auxiliary, Slicker. You have helped unpack some of the bales of clothing which they send out to the Anglican Missions, I know. I have heard you speak of it at Grey Wolf."

Slicker's blue eyes met hers full. They looked startlingly blue in the deep bronze of his face, and they looked wickedly

amused. He had read her ruse, and he was not going to let her benefit by it. He rose promptly.

"I shall be delighted to give Mrs. Barrymore any information she may require about the best kinds of things to send up there," he said.

"Slicker," began Jennifer despairingly, and then Mrs. Barrymore smiled across the room.

"You are a convert to mission work, then?" she asked.

"Well, not exactly a convert." Slicker remembered Miss Chubb's oft-repeated assertions that he would be the death of her and that the circumstance was fierce. "I do what little I can"; his voice was modest. "Sometimes I help the deaconess sell things to the breeds and Indians. A corporal in the M.P. and I are trying to marry off some of the girls around Grey Wolf if only we could get something stylish on them to take the eye——"

Jennifer's mother created a diversion for a few moments. But Slicker returned to the attack. He was enjoying himself better than he had expected, and the pretty girl was evidently interested.

"You need to send up some real smart dashing clothes, Mrs. Barrymore," he said. "I know what a breed girl wants to make her look human. I've tried most of the bale-room things on them——"

"Oh!" Mrs. Chichester shot the word out like a bomb, and Slicker's calm voice continued: "—on top of their other clothes. They're not nice about a thing fitting too quick. And if you pinch them in one place they—they make up for it in another. Find their level, as you may say. But Dick and I would like to see them in something stylish. Not neat, plain, serviceable garments, such as you send, and not squishy things either. There's one chiffon bonnet with rosebuds that I've tried on every girl in the district—and not one of 'em but would scare a skunk in it. You have to study their requirements, you know. There are half a dozen would make a good stand in the matrimonial market if they were dressed to kill."

"You appear to take a great interest in human nature," began Mrs. Chichester acidly.

"In half of it!"; Slicker's bow was as unimpeachable as his voice. But Jennifer broke in ruthlessly.

"He doesn't really know anything about it, Mrs. Barrymore. Miss Chubb never lets him into the bale-room if she can help it. She told me once that he took more watching than a hen in the flower-garden. He dressed up to-day to amuse us, and he is just trying to act the part."

"Now, Mrs. Chichester, didn't you read all about the Missions and the Mounted Police in those articles Jennifer wrote for one of the Toronto papers?"

"Slicker! I never wrote them. You know I didn't. And if I had——" Jennifer went red and white. She had been too far inside that life to speak of it lightly.

"Well, of course, you don't know the whole of it, anyway. A Mounted Policeman has to carry his life in his hand, you know. His life in one hand and his revolver in the other, and his reins between his teeth. That's why they won't let you into the Force if you have false teeth. Too much depends on their staying in. Mine are all right." Slicker smiled to prove it. "And I am joining next month. It's a tricky kind of life—but I don't want to harrow you by telling you too much about that sort of thing. We men are accustomed to danger, you know."

Jennifer looked at him with interest. His manner was certainly splendid. Even Mrs. Chichester was impressed, and Angela Barrymore never took her eyes off him.

"Of course anyone who lives constantly in such conditions cannot be exactly normal," vouchsafed Mrs. Chichester, with the air of one granting a concession.

"But I guess you don't know anything about the conditions yet. Did my cousin tell you of the river-steamers where the cabins are so small that you have to go outside to turn round, and the whole ship's company and passengers wash in one basin in the alley-way? Or about the shacks where the board-partitions are an inch apart, so that it's best to go to bed in the dark."

"That will do, Slicker!"

"Now, honey! Don't you pretend you don't know. Who pinned her things up all around the walls that night at Sheridan's? Think I didn't hear about it?"

With the other ladies' cordial co-operation Jennifer turned the conversation, and Slicker subsided into a corner with Angela Barrymore. Neither seemed anxious to come out of it when the move for departure was made; and Slicker accompanied them all into the hall and waved his good-byes from the step. When he came back Jennifer was waiting for him.

"You—you perfect little beast, Slicker," she cried. "What made you do it?"

"Be easy, honey"; the familiar term, caught from Dick, stilled Jennifer's heart for a moment. "That old lady with the three cock's-tails hasn't had such a time since she doesn't know when. You'll hear all about it at half a dozen afternoons. And think what kudos you'll get for having seen it all."

"You didn't tell her anything about—me, Slicker?"

Slicker put his hand on her shoulder, looking down at her.

"You didn't think that of me, honey? Not for one little minute. That's right. Now, come and have a jaw over the fire. Where's auntie?"

"Someone came to see her on business." Jennifer let herself down beside Slicker on the hearthrug, and flung on a hickory-knot. "I just hate you for making fun of all the splendid work people do for the missions," she said. "And you were very rude about the W.A., too."

"*She* didn't mind, bless you. And I told Miss Barrymore some plain truth."

"Oh, I hope it wasn't too plain, you wretch. You know how you——"

"Now, now, don't waste time. I want to get down to essentials. You're glad that I'm going into the Force?"

"Yes. Yes; I think so. But it will take——"

"I know, honey. I know it's not all ice-cream, sodas, and limelight effects. I know it's not an easy life in any one way. Tempest rubbed that into me—salted it in. But I have decided on it, and I will stick to it."

Jennifer was thinking of one man of the Royal North-West Mounted Police, and of the want of ease his life had given him.

"Did—did anyone else advise it?" she asked.

"Well—I told you what Dick Heriot said. But I didn't tell you why. Anyway, it's a life where a man has to be a man or get out. And that's attractive, you know."

"Oh, you boy! Is that all?"

"No." Slicker poked the fire until the sparks flew, and he did not look at her. "No. I've been rotting since you left, Jennifer. I had to take up something—or follow Ogilvie's trail."

"Slicker! Oh, Slicker!" Jennifer saw the boy face and figure through a sudden mist of tears. "I never thought of that for you."

"I never thought of it for myself. But it is in the air up there, someway. You know how it is, Jennifer. Nothing to do but hang around the hotel and smoke and yarn and drink. And when you were gone—well, I told you Heriot pulled me up that day of the fire. He didn't say much. But, my land, he makes a little go a long way. I wish he wasn't really such a brute."

"Perhaps if you—if you knew him better, dear." Jennifer's words were uncertain here, but Slicker's answer was not.

"D'you think I don't know him a hundred times better than you do, honey? Even if I could forgive him for what he did and said to you, I can't forgive him for what he's doing to Tempest."

Jennifer made the fire up before she asked:

"What is he doing to Mr. Tempest?"

"Well—you know how crazy poor old Tempest is over Grange's Andree? Heriot is cutting him out there, lock,

stock and barrel. But he hasn't the honesty to let Tempest know, and the poor old beggar is as blind as a bat where that girl is concerned. It's a beastly underhand trick to play any man. I gave up calling Heriot Dick when I got to the bottom of that."

"Oh, Slicker! You don't know what you are talking about. You never do. They were such friends——"

"That's the reason," said Slicker gloomily. "Tempest would never suspect. He's jealous of every other man, but he trusts Heriot. It's a bad business, honey, and Heriot's a bad lot. So's Andree. I can't see why fellows make such a fuss over the girl. Did I tell you I saw Robison when I came through Fort Saskatchewan? It was just a few days before he was hung. He'd been sick, you know, and that and the confinement had pulled him down. His voice was as hollow as a bottle after Ogilvie had done with it. But he didn't seem to worry any. 'How's Andree?' he asked, right away. 'Pretty as ever,' I said. 'She's shaken Tempest, and isn't wearing the willow over it either.' My! you should have seen how that brightened him up. Of course, I didn't tell him about Dick. He never loved Dick, anyway."

"I suppose not. Poke that log back, Slicker. It's smoking."

"I guess he just thinks of Andree, Andree all the time," said Slicker, obeying. "I wish somebody had drowned that girl when she was a kitten—I mean, as old as a kitten. She's done more harm than any one person has a right to, and she isn't through yet, I guess. There are stacks more fools left in the world. I suppose she is a beauty, though. Heriot has made some glorious pictures of her, Forbes says. He writes to me regularly. Rather a nice chap. You remember him, don't you?"

Slicker continued his monologue, giving Jennifer time to recover her poise. It was not long since she had had a letter from Dick: one of those interesting, vivid sketches of daily life at Grey Wolf which he knew so well how to write. There had been no word of love in it. He had only gained permission to write on condition that there should be none. But neither had there been any word of Andree. After all, why should there be? What had it to do with Jennifer if Dick painted pictures of Andree, or if he turned to Andree for comfort? What should it be to her except a gladness, a relief that he was not going to spoil his years waiting for what could not be? She did not think of Tempest. There was not room for Tempest even as a background when Dick filled the foreground of her thoughts. Hastily her mind said that she did not believe it, but that she hoped it. Surely it would be the best thing that could happen. Then she returned to present life to hear Slicker say:

"And so that's the end of that story."

"How very interesting, Slicker dear." Jennifer did not hesitate long enough to be ashamed of her mendacity. "Now, tell me all about Grey Wolf."

"Well, I've just told you——"

"Of course. I mean, tell me some more. I want to know about Mr. Bond, who always brought me every new wild-flower he found. And that funny old Poley at the barracks, and Mrs. Leigh. And Son-of-Lightning. I am so glad Mr. Leigh gave him that little shack in the Hudson Bay yard, Slicker. I would have hated to think of him lonely."

"You wouldn't be so glad if you were an employee of the H.B., honey. He'll drive them all to drink if they can't get the song out of him by a surgical operation or something. My, he is a caution. Well, it's very nice over here, but I'm glad I'm not going to stay, Jennifer. There's no place like the West once one has lived in it."

"Oh, Slicker. I do feel that. I do. I want to go back. Oh, I want to!"

Her voice was sharp with sudden pain. It brought Slicker's eyes on her.

"Why, honey; you had such a bad time out there, I *never* thought you'd want to go back."

"Well," Jennifer looked at the fire, speaking slowly. "I shall hear something about Harry some day, dear; and it is easier waiting for it out there. Here—it is a little difficult just occasionally. You see, Harry has disappeared, and—and, of course, all sorts of stories about it came East. Nearly everybody is perfectly sweet to me, but there are a few—like Mrs. Chichester—I know she just comes to see if she can find anything out——"

"Damn her," exploded Slicker. "No, I won't beg your pardon, Jennifer. I am the man of the family, and you should have told me this before."

"Dear, there is really nothing to tell." Jennifer patted the smooth, sunburnt cheek. "Perhaps I imagine it all. But I don't feel that houses can ever take the place of trees and lakes again. I want the West. Oh, I want the West."

Slicker did not know that Jennifer had left her heart there. But he agreed.

"Go back, then, honey. You could get your old house for a song any day. Hamilton's wife hates the place, and Hamilton is a sheep. He does as he's told, and if you offered there'd be no trouble. But—there's been a lot of talk, you know."

"I know. But—in what particular way?"

"You know things were said about you and Heriot." Slicker frowned at the fire. "*I* know it all for lies, of course. But if you go back—you may as well know it, Jennifer—there are

some who'll say that you came to hunt him up over this Andree business."

"Oh!" Jennifer felt her face burn. "I never thought——" she said in a choked voice. "I never thought of—you didn't think I meant to go back, Slicker? I couldn't go there!"

Slicker slid his arm round her, drawing her head against his shoulder.

"Honey, dear, did I do it clumsily? I'm so sorry. What with brutes like Ducane and Heriot I guess you've had enough of men. Best stay where you are with the little auntie, and when I get a post I'll have you both up to keep house for me, if it's any place short of Herschel Island. I will only be at Regina three or four months, you know, and I'll write and tell you every last thing about it.

He kept his word faithfully, and each week through those months of snow and frost brought her a letter headed "Regina Barracks": a letter that was a medley of boyish slang and manly thought and frank love for herself. There were fervid descriptions of "our mess," and "my horse," interlarded with tales of the "swank recruit" who "came such a buster" in riding-school, and the "tiger of a drill-sergeant who thinks he owns the universe—with all the 'h's' left out of it." Once there was mention of a corporal's love affair which came to an untimely end; and then, through dissertations on love and girls, Slicker ended: "I'm glad you're the kind of girl you are, honey. I'd have had to disown you if you were like some that a fellow runs across. By the way, what is that Miss Barrymore like, really? You might remember me to her when you see her, and ask her if she'd like some Indian moccasins. She admired mine."

Jennifer put down the letter and laughed with her eyes full.

"Oh, Slicker, Slicker," she said. "You're not going to meet girls like Angela Barrymore for years to come, dear. It will be the Mackenzie district and the Esquimaux for you, perhaps; or a little selection full of third-grade people. Or a place like Grey Wolf among the breeds and Indians. For that's the way you've chosen for your life-work, dear old Slicker."

When Christmas was past he wrote again; blotted sheets full of delight. "Just think, honey; the C.O. told me the other day that I'd probably be sent out before my time was up. Patted me on the back meta—(can't spell the beast), and said I was a good boy, and I went and tumbled over myself in the Gym for a solid hour to work off my bloated pride. Hope my boss will be more Tempest's shape than Heriot's. And I hope it won't be too civilised. I don't want to do the goose-step along the pavement of a nasty proper little town.

Guess I could keep down a better job than that. And—honey—perhaps I'll come across Ducane for myself. I won't shy off any in letting him know what I think of him, I promise."

Jennifer folded that letter with tight lips. Slicker never dared speak of Ducane to her face. And not to anyone did she dare speak of him herself. He had made life too hard; too cruelly bitter. And for his sake it must be bitter all her days.

It was long since Dick had written to her; longer still since she had written to him. The news which Slicker had brought tormented her night and day, and Dick's utter silence put the seal of truth to it.

She did not know that he was afraid to write because the cloud which hung over him would surely have darkened his words, and because he was ashamed to tell what that cloud might be.

He avoided Andree because he feared her, and he avoided Tempest for much the same reason. But his feeling towards Tempest almost deepened into hate very shortly; for Tempest had saved his honour by the very thing which had caused Dick to lose his. Tempest had taken hold of his work again. He had put personal interests from him, and flung himself into the wider, fuller river of the life about him. Labour was his salvation as it has been the salvation of many a man before him, and because his only chance lay in giving his all to it, he gave; lifelessly, sorrowfully, at first, but day by day with strengthening fibres. The very tone of Grey Wolf began to alter. It was known that the Inspector was "watching out," here and there and everywhere else, and men braced up under the flash of his eyes and the lash of his tongue when Tempest went to sweep the refuse of the hidden places out into the sunlight.

He challenged criticism and obvious retort everywhere, but he did not get it. For if he did not spare others neither did he spare himself, and his honesty there did for him what nothing else could have done. But of the real Tempest, the man of the glad ideals and the frank friendships, there seemed nothing left; and Dick knew why. He knew that Tempest could probably have forgiven and forgotten anything but that treachery; and realisation of this haunted him, driving the sin of it home to him past his attempted unconcern and impatient resentment and his cynical knowledge that he was no worse than many another.

Dick had saved Tempest at danger to himself, and that danger grew, embittering him as time went by. Andree alone made his life difficult and unpleasant, for she upbraided and pleaded and coquetted and tormented him whenever occasion arose. Once, catching him in the wood-trail by the lake on a

cold evening when the sinking sun left a rose-red bank along the indigo-blue clouds she threatened him ; and he, being cold and tired and hungry from a long day's patrol, struck her across the clutching hands with the little switch he carried. It was a light blow, but it made her spring back, glaring like a wild cat.

" I hate you," she gasped. " I hate you. I will keel you. Some day I will make you keel."

" You are welcome to try." He shrugged his shoulders. " I don't know that I want to prevent you. Will you leave me alone now ? "

" To be whipped," she said through her teeth. " Ah ! To be whipped ! I hate you."

" That's the most cheerful thing I've heard for a long time," said Dick dryly. " Stick to it, my dear girl " ; and he pushed past her and went back, leaving her standing in the trail.

That night he tried for the fifth time to write to Jennifer. But it was of no use. His own thoughts and his own will had made of this matter a thing so sordid and dishonourable that he could not put it down in words for her to read, and he could not write to her and not speak of it. He was not even sorry for Andree now. He was not even glad for Tempest. And at that moment he heard Tempest in the passage, speaking to Bond.

" Certainly," said Tempest. " You may depend on me. I'll have it attended to at once."

Dick laughed a little, biting on his pipe-stem. It was he who had ensured that Tempest should speak and act so again. But where was his own reward ? He had lost, half-unfolded, the big case which was to have meant so much to him. He had lost his friend ; he had lost such self-respect as he had, and life seemed a deadlock, with little capacity for more pleasure or pain in it. Then, because it is not in nature that a deadlock can continue for very long, one morning when spring was near and the first waveys flew north again, Tempest sent for him into the office. There were some official letters on the desk, and Tempest's manner was fully as official.

" I am ordered to make an investigatory patrol through the uncharted land between Great Slave Lake and Fullerton," he said. " Flora, fauna, geological conditions, inhabitants, and so on. I am to take three men with me, and your name is mentioned as one of the three. We leave as soon as the rivers are clear of ice, and will be gone eight months or perhaps a year. These are my official instructions ; but I am told to report if either of us are unfit for the journey. It will be a rough one, and will need picked men. Have you anything to say ? "

His eyes were colder and the lines of his face harder than they used to be. But he had complete control of himself, and

Dick had never seen him without it since that night which neither would forget.

"I am quite fit for the work," said Dick. He smiled slightly. "Let us hope that the other two will provide the social element."

"We will do the work. That is all which matters."

"You have always said so."

The delicate inflection of the sneer brought the blood to Tempest's face.

"I owe you recognition for what you have done for me," he said. "Do not think that I forget it—or that I forget your motive in doing it. Tell Kennedy that I want to see him at once—before he goes out."

For both men a new interest came into life after that. The ordinary futile daily complaints seemed less irritating now that there was a horizon of change to round them. As always there was the freighter who had contracted for ordinary wage in carting and who demanded more because unlooked-for conditions had arisen; there was the breed who had sold his land and who could not understand that he must not continue to live on it; there was the Indian who had traded a half-dozen skins to Moore and Holland, and who, on hearing that he could get a better price elsewhere, required them back again; and there were a thousand more of the needless, inevitable things to be got through as winter died under the breath of spring and the ice went out, and colour and life came throbbing back to the land.

And there was work to be done for this patrol also. New and specially-tested Peterborough canoes were needed. A good pair of field-glasses were indispensable; also a camera; a strong and light outfit of cooking, surveying and other equipments; besides tinned foods and everything else which could be compressed into the smallest compass. Tempest had to take a journey to Winnipeg in connection with these arrangements, and on his return he stayed an hour with Randal at Pitcher Portage. Slackness of effort and shortness of funds, combined with a divided interest at headquarters, had held back the work on the telegraph-line, and Randal still continued to live in his little shack and to connect himself with the world by his little key on the lonely river-rim of the Portage.

Randal was cooking his mid-day meal when Tempest came to the door. The shack was as crowded and uncomfortable as it ever was; but Tempest noticed a deep-worn track straight from it to the tepee among the spruces, and when he walked in he found a couple of half-Indian babies sprawling with the dogs on the earth floor and chewing strips of raw bacon. Randal pushed the living tangle of content aside with his foot and

hastened to set beans and bannock before Tempest, and Tempest smiled, remembering.

"Got the better of you at last, have they, Randal?" he asked.

Randal reddened up his swarthy skin, and clattered knives and forks with embarrassment.

"Why—I guess they can't help it, the little——," he said. "Canadian-born they are, anyways." He jerked his thumb at the smaller of the two where it lay on its chest, sucking hard, and staring with round, unwinking eyes.

"Near died this winter, she did," he remarked. "Croup or colic or suthin', an' them domned parents didn't know what to do no more'n nuthin'. So I up an' het a biler o' water an' shoves her inter it. Tell yer she looked cute settin' there—like a little brown squ'r'l, an' hangin' onter me finger like grim death ter a nigger. So—she pulled around, an' she a-took a shine ter me, someways. Like she was wonderin' what I'd be like s'posin' I was tried out fer good. Git away out o' this, Abosti. Git! You won't find no bootlaces ter chew here."

He lifted the little solemn armful, and Tempest chucked it under the round, brown chin.

"That's right, Randal," he said cheerfully. "After all, they are going to be our colonists, you know. We must make the best stuff we can out of them. She's not likely to be one of those hysterical nuisances who are always in the doctor's hands, anyway."

"Not much! Hoe her own row all right, won't yer, girlie? Sure, sir. I'll attend about them messages right away."

Tempest rode on into Grey Wolf with his eyes softened. Randal's life was cruelly circumscribed; terribly lonely. But he had found the compensation. Was Tempest so much a lesser man than Randal that he could not also find the compensation?

Early in the next month came the last night at Grey Wolf, and Tempest walked for long under the cotton-woods, seeing the lights which he would not know any more blink out along the dimming street. For it was not likely that he would ever come back to Grey Wolf, and it was not likely that after to-morrow he would ever again see Grange's Andree. The whole of him was shrinking from the future which would possibly be Andree's. He seldom spoke to her now, and he seldom spoke to Dick. He could ask no questions there. He could only fear. He could only hate with a bitter helplessness the man whom Andree loved. And he could do nothing more, be with his hands tied, and the great silent North waiting to swallow him.

For long he walked under the cotton-woods, and then, sharply, leaping through his brain, came the thought:

"She was a good woman—and young enough to understand. Perhaps she would look after Andree."

He wheeled; went swiftly into his office, and wrote one of his direct, clearly-put letters to Jennifer.

Dick also wrote to Jennifer that evening. He had meant to go without it, but in his packing he had come on the little millboard painting of her which he had always carried until shame made him put it away. In the little bunk-room he stood still, staring down on the bright face in the candle-light, and his eyes were grim. For the difference between the centre of effort and the centre of lateral direction was too great in Dick. He needed a hand on the tiller, and Fate had denied him the only two hands which he would have allowed there. Or was it his own reckless temper which had denied him?

Suddenly Kennedy came clattering upstairs cheerfully, and Dick thrust the picture back in his breast and finished his packing. But before he slept he wrote a few brief lines to Jennifer.

That letter went East by the same mail as Tempest's; but when they lay in her lap together Jennifer opened Tempest's first. And after that she picked up the sheet and the torn envelope and the other envelope with that familiar black writing, and carried them all up to her room and locked the door on herself. Twice over she read Tempest's letter. Its quiet, curbed language told very little; not much more than Slicker had told. But it made her fear to open that other letter. Her pulses beat until they stifled her, and her eyes were blurred. She knew, with a sharpness, with a terrible sureness, that Dick meant more to her than anything—than anyone. And was this written to say that she did not mean anything to him any more? She set her teeth in her lip, ripped the envelope, and pulled out the big sheet with its strong black writing. There were only a few lines in the middle of it.

"I go North in the morning for perhaps a year. I have tried to pull a man out of the mud and got further in myself than I expected. You will understand that this was likely to happen to me. And understand that you are in my life and my heart and my very soul. I could not tear you out though I tried until the world's end, Jennifer."

The heavy twist of his initials finished it, and Jennifer stared at it with flushed cheeks and shining eyes. She had no right to be glad. But she was glad; frankly, gloriously glad. This good-bye of his on the edge of one of those long plunges into the unknown held none of the suave, idle words with which he could cover his thoughts so well. It was a flagrant disobedience of her commands. It was a daring defiance of

all which Tempest's letter told. It gave no explanation, no apology, no penitence. She had no right to be glad. She should have been angry, for he flung his words at her, challenging her to love him the less for all his misdeeds and his failures and his selfishness. And instead she laughed a little; knowing that she could not, and knowing, too, the glory of that renunciation which forbade them ever to tell each other these things face to face.

That night, kneeling by her mother's bed in the dark, Jennifer spoke of her desire to go back to Grey Wolf. She could not tell the reason. But she knew that the duty which Dick owed to Grange's Andree and which Tempest, without laying undue stress, had clearly limned, was hers to discharge. How deep that obligation might be she did not know. Why she resented it so little she did not know. But she did know that little lonely Grey Wolf by the far-away northern river called her as no other place on earth had ever called her. Of all this she said nothing to her mother, but there was much understood between the two which even the tenderest love must leave unsaid. The elder woman laid her widowed hand on the young hand which was so infinitely worse than widowed.

"This may be too hard for you, Jennifer," she said. "And for more than you. Have you thought of that?"

"Yes, dear. But I must go. Over there I shall hear—little things. And I can't do without them. They are all that is left in my life."

The mother was silent. She had neither right nor power to venture here. It was beyond her control, beyond her understanding. Her daughter had won her way down strange paths where neither love nor guarding could hedge her in. But one thing she knew, and she spoke it.

"If you do go I will go with you, Jennifer."

"Oh, mother of mine, would you? Truly, would you? But you might get your dear aristocratic nose frost-bitten in the winter. And there are so few of the comforts you're accustomed to."

"You are the principal comfort which I'm accustomed to. I can do without the other things, but not without you, darling."

Jennifer put her lips to the fine old face.

"I don't want to be selfish," she said. "But I shall blow the roof off something if I have to stay here much longer. And you'll love the Indian babies, mother mine. I'll steal one in a moss-bag for you. Mrs. Grange has got so many that she'd never miss two or three."

She mentioned Moosta's name easily, but she could not speak of Andree. Her mother could neither help nor understand there. She could not be expected to. For Jennifer's own need she had found the solution to the thing which had troubled

her. Dick had redeemed Tempest at the cost of some dishonour to himself, and possibly some well-deserved shame, and he had been man enough not to ask forgiveness where it was not likely to be accorded. But, because Grange's Andree was also a woman who loved him and who could never come near him in life, Jennifer felt a thrill of joy and thankfulness that it should be for her to give comfort here and to untie the threads that Dick's careless hands had knotted.

She dreamed that night of the ways whereby that life which the great North was absorbing should cross tracks with her own again. The stray word of a breed who had passed him on the rivers. Indians coming in with the winter furs, who knew the trails he went. A factor, or a missionary, perhaps, at whose house he had stayed. Letters brought by the steamer and written long months before. The wide brooding majesty of the North closed round her, and those long, calm days on the Athabaska were clear to Jennifer as she fell asleep; and in place of the rattling cars she heard again the water parting at the prow, and instead of the flaring light across the street she saw the moon-reflection, deep and serene and glorious, in the bosom of the drowsing river.

Three telegrams and two letters secured the old house on the Lake to Jennifer again, and in the midst of her packing came another letter from Slicker, written from Saskatoon. He enclosed, for Jennifer's benefit, young Forbes' description of the leaving of the Long Patrol from Grey Wolf and Grange's Andree's part in the matter.

"I guess it was a pretty shady thing for Dick to chuck her away as he did," commented Slicker. "Of course, Andree is the limit, all right. But it must have been a shindy, as you'll see from what Lin Forbes says.

"'They'd been keeping their mouths shut with both hands as to date and time of leaving,' wrote young Forbes. 'But it leaked out somehow; and when we all got down to the steamer Andree was waltzing around like a crazy thing. She froze on to Dick—gave him a devil of a time. And there was Tempest standing on the wharf and waiting. I tell you it was pretty sick to see. I don't guess he ever meant more than a bit of fooling. That's Dick, you know. He has an eye for every pretty girl, and Andree is uncommonly pretty, though she has gone off a bit lately. But he got served for it. She was all out. Let him have it good and strong. He made the best of it, I guess. Just laughed, and kissed her in front of us all, and told her not to be a little fool. Then the boat backed off, and there was Andree running over her ankles into the water, and crying out, "Dick! Dick!" But he'll never come back to her. He knows a trick worth two of that. But

he wiped Tempest's eye over the business, and I reckon Tempest has too much grit to forgive him easily. Those two are about as friendly as a couple of wolf-bred huskies these days.'

"I guess there'll be something doing before they part company," added Slicker. "Dick'll be sorry for his devilry before he's done. Of course she was ruining Tempest, and this has straightened him up again. But I don't imagine Dick went into it just for that. He isn't built of the stuff they make martyrs out of."

Because all human nature is irrational Jennifer did not attempt to explain to herself why she felt more pity than anger over this. Dick might have treated her as he had treated Andree, and she could have forgiven him; not only because the elements of submission and self-renunciation are very strong in the nature of most women, but because, seeing all things through the glass of her own clear heart. she believed that the man must suffer the more keenly of the two as for awhile she stood, with her dainty clothes strewed round her on floor and bed and in the open boxes. Simple they were, but one and all bore just that nameless, elusive charm which was Jennifer's own: that charm which made a man, standing on the deck of a little steamer that chug-chugged its way down the Great Slave river, forget all that he had done and would not do, and hold the memory of her before him, hour by silent hour, drawing his strength for the future therefrom.

There were comments which it was better that Jennifer should not hear when she came again to Grey Wolf. But because she had guessed at them, and met them in her heart long since, she did not quail at them now. Son-of-Lightning was re-installed in his shack behind the kitchen, and his tuneless singing warmed Jennifer's spirit, although it made her mother laugh until she cried, and then say:

"You must make him exercise his voice at regular hours only, Jennifer. Hours when I go walking or driving. He will kill me dead if I have to hear him more than once a week."

"I could never make him understand all that, dear," said Jennifer. "But I might explain that it would be a terrible thing for him to damage his throat by over-exertion if Clara is any good as a medium."

Clara was the breed provided by Mrs. Leigh in place of the original Louisa. She lived in the kitchen and drove the staid Toronto servant to despair five times a day. "But," as Jennifer said, "she kept Susan from being lonely, and even something to worry one is better than isolation."

Leigh had also stocked up the necessary horses and pigs and the necessary hired man. Moosta's last baby but one was borrowed for a week, "just to help settle them in," according

to Jennifer's plea; and then Jennifer took breath and looked round on the dear familiar world out of which the dearest and most familiar elements had dropped. Moosta's baby was the deep-laid plan whereby she hoped to trap Andree. For she knew that if Grange's Andree cared for any things on earth those things were Grange's babies. And this proved true. In the beginning of the second week Andree stopped Jennifer outside the Hudson Bay Store and spoke to her.

"Are you meaning to keep Moosta's Rosario all the time?" she asked abruptly.

Jennifer looked at her with a quickening heart-beat. This was the girl who, if talk told truth, loved Dick even as Jennifer loved him, and by a better right.

"Why, no," she said hastily. "Did you want him back, Andree?"

"I gave him his name," said Andree. "Saw it in a book. It does seem like the back-parlour is empty without him."

Jennifer knew that there were a round dozen more in that back-parlour. But she understood. It is not the number which fill up a place, but the one.

"I'm so sorry," she said. "Would you like to come over and fetch him back, Andree? You can drive out with me, and I'll bring you back before dark."

Andree drew back, shy and alarmed. She was more the wild wood animal than ever. The olive oval of her face was thinner and paler, and there was a strange, deeper look in her eyes.

"I—I guess it no matter that much," she stammered. "Peut-être you bringing him back soon."

"Well," said Jennifer artfully, "Mrs. Grange said I could keep him as long as I liked, and I don't think it would be quite civil to take him back yet. She might think I was tired of him. Of course if you run off with him that is a different matter."

"Moosta would hardly notice s'pose he back or not," said Andree, and Jennifer smothered a smile.

"Come out and see him, anyway," she said. "He calls your name, Andree. It is the only word he says."

"Ah! Mon petit!" The girl's face lighted up. "He is not to forget, the blessed one. No! Mon petit ami Rosario."

Then she recollected herself swiftly.

"Maybe I will come to-morrow—or some next day," she said, and disappeared into the dark of the side-passage again.

In the dusk of two evenings later Jennifer saw Andree haunting the shadows round Son-of-Lightning's shack, and she ran out and brought the girl in to the warm lighted room where Rosario lay before the fire, kicking blissfully on his little back. It brought Jennifer's laugh on a sob to see the girl go down

on her knees and tangle her curls in the chubby fingers, and coo the soft Indian baby-talk which was so alien to the white woman. And Rosario chuckled and crowed ; tossing his arms until Andree looked up with the beautiful face laughing through her hair.

" Il m'aime," she cried. " He do like me best. Dieu ! It is *me* best."

Later she gathered him into her arms ; sitting on the floor and rocking and crooning until he fell asleep. She took no count of Jennifer. Women never entered much into Andree's calculation unless they got in her way, and Jennifer was deeply thankful that the girl did not know how much this woman who slipped down on the rug beside her stood in her way.

" Andree," she said ; " Mrs. Grange showed me a very pretty picture of you. I should think it would make you feel so proud. Mr. Heriot painted it, didn't he ? "

" Oui," said Andree on a long-drawn breath.

" And he painted others too." Jennifer's voice faltered a little. She was striving to crush down an unworthy doubt. But the girl beside her was so beautiful, so very beautiful. And she knew that she was plain. " Won't you show me the others some day, Andree ? "

For a little the girl was silent. Jennifer saw the colour pulsing in her face and the flutter of her breast. Then Andree cast Rosario aside with that impetuosity to which he was so accustomed that it did not break his sleep and hid her face in her hands.

" It makes me go seeck inside to talk 'bout him," she wailed. " I do not know. I do not know. I not care for people to call me belle any more."

Jennifer breathed sharply. The bent, dark head blurred before her eyes. Then she put her arm round the shoulders and drew Andree's head against her.

" Tell me," she said gently, " is it because he had to go away ? He could not help that, Andree."

As usual under pressure Andree sloughed off all reserve and flung her heart bare to Jennifer as she had done to Dick.

" I love him," she cried. " I do love him so I could *keel* him. And he laugh at me. He kiss me—and laugh. The place burn. It burn now. One day he say, ' I love you, Andree.' Now he laugh—and for two-three months before he go he no speak to me. And one day he hit me with his whip. I hate him. I hate him—ah, mon Dieu, I love him so."

Jennifer controlled her voice with difficulty.

" And you think he does not love you, Andree ? " she asked.

" I not know. Perhaps—and perhaps again. But I think he hate me. And I hate him. But if again he smile at me—

ah," she broke into violent sobbing; "ah, Dick, come back. I not hate you. Oh, come back from so far away."

"If he told you that he loved you——" Jennifer could not finish.

"Oh, mais vous savez what are men. To-day to kiss, to-morrow to hit. Dick did hit when he kiss. He was not like the others. They did pray to me. Dick make me pray to him. Ah!" she shook herself free, and sat up, biting her lips. "When he come again to Grey Wolf I will kill him. He no good, anyway. Before he go he drink—he drink too much sometimes. He no good. And he make game of me. Très bien! I make much game of him. There are plenty more love Andree. Ah! I do hate him. Mon Dieu!"

Jennifer could not handle this mood any more than Dick could handle the softer mood of that other night. She shivered, going white under the tense fury of the words. Dimly she recognised that there were elements in Andree which she could never understand, even as there were elements in Dick. For the rugged rocks and the fierce winds and the deep secret woods were the forbears of their souls in the days when Andree's Indian fathers and the roystering gentlemen adventurers who were responsible for Dick had known this young land of Canada as no men of a later day could know it.

Andree stood up, knotting back her curls with swift, skilful fingers.

"It is another day I will come for Rosario," she said, and then Jennifer found her feet and her courage together.

"Come soon, Andree," she said. "And talk to me as much as ever you want to. And by and by, perhaps, you will not be so unhappy. You say that there are plenty more people who care for you."

"Mais—they are not Dick," said Andree, and went away out into the night.

CHAPTER XIV.

"ON THE LONG TRAIL."

"BIG BLANKET, is it?" said Gillington. "Just look his name up, Otway. Two wives and six children, eh? Got them all here, has he? Well, Francois, tell him to go ahead and name them so I'll know he hasn't swapped any since last year. Otway, I guess I'll want out another box of the paper."

The Treaty-clerk disappeared into the little tent, and Gillington pushed his hat back from his heated, florid face, and nodded as the immovable Big Blanket introduced his family, one by one, through the interpreter.

"Little Cow, she old wife," said Big Blanket, thrusting the wrinkled wisp of womanhood forward. "Glory-of-the-eyes, she new." Then he ranged up the berry-brown, laughing children, and told them over. "Violette. Piapot. Song-of-all-the-birds. Apisis. Smoke. Beak-of-the-eagle." He stretched his hands for the little packet of dollar-bills, done up neatly in fives, as Gillington paid them down on the big box in front of the little box on which he sat.

Word by word Francois translated as Gillington spoke.

"Payuk, nesoo, nisto, naoo, nayanun, nikoowasik. Those packets are for the children, Big Blanket. Three more lots for yourself and the wives, making kakut mitatut in all. Nine sets for Big Blanket, Otway. What's that, Doc.?"

The heat of the sun poured over him as he turned where the grey smoke from a mosquito-smudge blew sideways, hiding and revealing the silent knots of Indians—Chipewyans, Dog-legs and Yellow Knives—who had come to Fort Resolution on the Great Slave Lake for their yearly payment of the Treaty money. And this Treaty money is the pledge of the Canadian Government that it will stand by the children of the North-West to the extent of five dollars yearly to every man and woman and child which can produce the Treaty-tickets carrying his or her name, the number of his band and family, and the date of his last payment.

A big man with his eyes reddened by the smoke-reek halted at Gillington's elbow. He carried a brown battered bag, and

there was a suggestion of strenuousness about all his movements. For the last three hours he had been examining wounds, disease, and various sicknesses in the colony of tepees set along the sandy shore, and those hours had been very full indeed. Because many of the distant tribes take their doctor as they take their Treaty-money, once only in a year.

"I've just seen that old scoundrel, Turquetil," he said. "He and his son had a fight, and they're more or less laid out. Send them their Treaty by Charlie Diamond, won't you, Gillington? He'll see that they get it."

Gillington growled assent, ticking off the necessary dollars for Little Hat and his belongings. Charlie Diamond was Chief of the Canoe River Band of which Turquetil was an unworthy member.

"Sure," he said. "Got many sick, Sherwood?"

The doctor thrust his lip out. He was lighting a pipe with eager fingers.

"Same as usual," he said. "If only the Lord had made 'em able to comprehend the meaning of cleanliness life would be simplified. Joseph Iron broke his leg yesterday, and I met him crawling out for his Treaty just now. For the land's sake, Gillington, what are you doing with all those police? Do the people at headquarters think our precious lives need guarding?"

Gillington glanced round to the tent where, in the shade, three khaki uniforms made a dull blur. Two more walked the stretch of sandy level immediately behind the tepees. As Gillington looked they separated; and one went up to the barracks and the other came down towards the tent.

"Those four came in just now," he said. "A patrol going through to Fullerton. Tempest is in charge. You remember him? The man who was made Inspector for his moral influence—and a few more reasons."

He made the introductions briefly as Tempest came up, then turned to his work again. And from where he lay by the tent with his hat pulled over his eyes and his pipe going fiercely to free him of the mosquitoes, Dick watched this scene which had been so familiar to him in other days: on the Little Slave River; on the Peace; at Vermilion, and which never grew stale. For it was colour and movement, tragedy and comedy. It was Life.

He lifted on his elbow; dragged out his sketch-book, and roughed in the picture with a charcoal stub. And it was a picture worth while to the man who could see.

Back of all lay the broad blue line of the lake that lipped the sandy beach. Then the dirty brown, close-set jumble of tepees, half-hid by smoke that lifted sometimes to show the white houses of the Fort beyond. The medley of children and dogs

that rolled, laughing and yapping, about the tents. The fathers and mothers of the race, crowding round the Treaty-Payer; pure Mongolian type, some with eager, slant-eyes for the "sooneyahs" which Gillington was dealing; erect, dignified chiefs who ask help of the white man against none but the white man and who manipulate their family quarrels in private; ill-made derelicts, hauling their loose store-clothes tighter round their unwashed bodies, and looked on with disfavour by the sturdier Dog-legs. And foremost of all, the little group of white men: Gillington straddled on his box, with his shirt loose at the thick throat and the sweat dripping from him as he flung his jokes and genial encouragements to the mercy of Francois' interpretation, seeing in answer the white of eyes and teeth flashing out suddenly with a coarsely-humorous retort; the slim, gentlemanly Otway, with the furtive eyes which told, while they believed they hid, the reason which had brought him so far from the land and the class which bred him; Sherwood, the big-boned, merry-eyed doctor, who carried his lonely beat over a good-sized section of a half-continent—and Tempest.

Dick smudged them in; longing for his paints to dab on the raw vermilion of that Cree's waist-scarf, or the saffron tempered by dirt of that woman's shawl. Or the blue of the lake, and the warm umbers of the tepees, and the pure ash-grey of a dog that scratched itself at Tempest's feet. Tempest he did not care to look at. Through those long steamer days on the Athabaska Dick had seen more of Tempest than he ever wished to see again, and he was dreading the plunge into the wilderness as he had not dreaded the future ever before in all his life. For the fret of that impotent rage which we feel only against those whom we have wronged and who will not give us the satisfaction of justifying ourselves was on Dick, by day and by wakeful night.

Of what Tempest thought through these weeks which held them so closely together Dick did not know. There was nothing in him which could interpret the heart of this man to whom the higher and the deeper places of life were open. Of late he had sometimes even grown to fear Tempest. The utter self-restraint of the still man who walked with him by day and sat beside him over the evening fires when neither the pipe-smoke or the long loneliness could knit them together into more than casual speech had its effect on his nerves and on his heart. Tempest was completely just to him; completely courteous and kind. But Dick understood well that it was the gentleman in Tempest which owed these things to himself; not the friend which owed them to Dick. Not once did he suffer Dick to look below the surface of his quiet manner; and Dick, knowing the savagery in himself which would have had satisfaction for a

wrong done him, grew uneasy and resentful, and found it daily more difficult to keep Tempest out of his thoughts.

It was Dick's nature to demand an eye for an eye, and until now he had always felt contempt for the man who asked less. But he could not feel contempt for Tempest. He knew what he had done to this man; he knew the torment which he had given him to bear, and he knew that Tempest was still the stronger. He would not soon forget his good-bye to Andree on the bank at Grey Wolf, with Tempest standing by. And he knew that the fear which walked with Tempest eternally was the fear for this girl whom Dick had waked to the realisation of love and dependence and had flung away to seek helplessly and blindly for what she could find instead. There could be no forgiveness for such a thing as this, and Dick did not expect it. He did not want it, for Tempest would have seemed to him less than human if he could have given it. But, gradually, he was realising, keenly, bitterly, that he was controlled and driven by the blind forces of the universe only, and that for Tempest and Jennifer there was a higher grade.

Life made sport of them and tied their feet, even as his were tied. But it could not break their spirits. They were nearer that supreme thing which Jennifer called God, and which Tempest had once called Understanding. And for the sacrifice of self which that required of them they had surely found the compensation. And then Dick rolled over, looking straight at Tempest where he talked with Sherwood in the sunlight, and he wondered if this man was to use for Canada only all those great and rich gifts for which his life had qualified him.

Gillington and Otway were speaking together, low-voiced, and before them stood an Indian girl with restless, beseeching eyes which made Dick think of Andree's as he had seen them sometimes. Her coarse, black hair was parted over the young forehead and hung on her shoulders in two thick plaits. There was a little moss-bag baby in the curve of her arm, and two round-eyed, tottering, elder babies clung to her ragged black skirts. She looked so very young and undefended, and Dick felt curious to know what was puzzling the white men in connection with her. Gillington sat up at last, pushing his hat back. His ruddy, jolly face was troubled.

"Sorry, Leaf-of-the-woods," he said. "I can't do it. I'll give you Treaty for yourself and the other two; but I can't let you have it for the baby."

The baby, as though understanding its repudiation, gave a little cry where the girl moved it on her arm. Tempest turned with a half-spoken sentence on his lips. It broke as he looked at Leaf-of-the-woods, and Dick knew why. Those soft wide eyes had brought back Andree to Tempest also.

"What's wrong?" he asked of Gillington, and Gillington rubbed his nose vexedly.

"Why—she can't account for the kiddie. He isn't one of Canada's legitimate citizens, and I can't pay him Treaty."

"Poor little beggar." Tempest regarded the placid baby-face with pity. "Can't you waive the law for once, Gillington?"

"Guess not. It wouldn't do to create a precedent. I'm sorry, too. I reckon those five dollars mean as much to her as two or three hundred to you or me."

Leaf-of-the-woods raised her eyes to Tempest. She did not understand what these big-voiced men were saying; but she read that heart-note in Tempest's tone which is common to all languages. Dick saw Tempest's grave face flush and soften.

"Can't you manage it some way, Gillington?" he asked.

"As an officer of the law, I can't. But there's nothing to prevent your giving her the five dollars if you feel like it."

Gillington laughed at his own joke. But Tempest's eyes lighted to a gleam of the mischievous laughter of earlier days.

"Nothing to prevent my adopting that kid and insuring his yearly payment out of my own pocket, I suppose?" he asked.

"Nothing but the state of your own pocket," agreed Gillington.

"I fancy it can stand that. Will you explain to Francois that I want the girl to know that I'm going to be responsible for those five dollars in future, and that I am going to give the child my name so that I can keep track of him."

"You always were quixotic," remarked Sherwood, looking at him curiously.

"Likely enough," cried Tempest dryly, and raised his voice, calling to a little burly priest who was passing from the Roman Catholic Mission.

The priest halted, and Tempest went to him, and then the two came back together. A gaping young breed was sent to the lake for a dipper of water, and before the rough box with its thumbed account-books Dick saw enacted a queer little ceremony which left him undecided to the end of his life concerning its comedy or tragedy.

Gillington's jolly face was composed into an unusual solemnity, and Otway leaned against the tent-opening with his brows knit and in his eyes a haunting look of memory. Among the crowding Indians stood the fat priest with rusty cassock and kindly, flabby face. Tempest took the baby from the girl's arms, starting with all a man's alarm as it began to cry. Hastily he thrust it into the priest's hands, giving his own name with it, and the child screamed strongly as the water sprayed over it from the priest's hot fingers.

Then the mother took it again; Gillington, relaxing the corners of his mouth with evident relief, made a careless joke, and insisted on Tempest himself placing the five dollars in the soft dark fingers of Neil Fraser Tempest the younger.

Dick got up and walked hurriedly down to the canoes on the Lake shore. Was this brown, greasy baby the only one who was to carry on Tempest's name when the man's work was done and that alert, breezy step stilled for ever? Dick guessed that it almost surely would be so. There was a lonely life before Tempest now: a lonely life and his work, supposing that this crust of quiet dignity behind which he had withdrawn himself hid living fires and not burnt-out ash. Dick would have given all he had, except a certain little oil-painting, to know what lay beneath that crust. He could have borne with Tempest for an outspoken enemy, or he could have abased himself and asked forgiveness for the first time in his life. But this rigid, outward calm maddened him; and yet, here again because Tempest was the stronger, he could not break through it.

He went down to the Lake where the canoes lay, loaded and ready for their long unknown journey to the East. The other two policemen of the Patrol were there, packing in their own dunnage, and joking with the few white men who stood round. The mosquitoes hummed in swarms across the low swamp-land, and Myers, the stocky little Corporal detailed from work on the Yukon, was swearing in Cockney English as he puffed his briar pipe and beat the air right and left. The bowman of Dick's canoe was a tall, melancholy French-Canadian, with drooping moustache and drooping shoulders and muscles of springy steel. He looked at Myers with his dark, sad eyes.

"Parblieu! You are too fat," he said. "They will eat you always. And it is to be worse where we go in the next days."

"Ain't 'e a nice feller ter have along on a picnic?" appealed Myers to the lookers-on. "A reel merry company, that's what 'e is. 'Wot's the good o' livin' terday?' 'e says. 'We gotter die termorrer.' Yesser. Why—yesser. We ain't got nothin' more ter wait for—'cept them breeds."

Tempest had hired two breeds and a canoe to help lighten the loads across the dangerous Long Traverse of rapids on the Lake. He looked right and left for them now, drawn to his full height, with his bright eyes keen as Dick's own. Outwardly he seemed all that a workman should be. But the test that would try him in so many ways was not yet.

Up the sweep of the shore came a canoe, shot forward by the quick, long strokes of the breeds. They paddled Indian-fashion, changing the hands every few minutes, and the flash of the dripping paddles overhead dazzled in the sunlight.

Dick looked down at the canoes which were to carry the little patrol so far. Long and snaky-brown they lay; of varnished strip cedar; a good eighteen feet in length, with a forty-four inch beam and a draught of eighteen inches. Tempest had chosen them from the design-book, and he knew every straik of them; for he and Dick had tried them on the rapids of the Athabaska and he had gone over them, foot by foot, as they lay covered on the deck of the steamer which brought them up to Smith's Landing. They were fitted with oars, and big rolled lateen sails, and with many paddles. Aft and amidships were stowed part of the freight which was to feed and clothe the men until they touched to white-man life again, and at the shore-lip the two breeds were stowing the remainder into their own light birch canoe.

A man beside Dick stooped to lift the prow of a canoe.

"What's her portaging weight?" he asked; and Dick, blowing the tobacco-smoke round him in a cloud, said:

"About one-twenty pounds. The very lightest make I've come across for the strength."

"Ah!" said the man, and wagged his head. "But you don't know where you're going. Where a feller has to cut portages and portage his canoe afterwards I guess it gets heavy enough."

Dick turned away with a grunt. He did not like men who looked out for trouble. Besides, it was so very true that he did not know where he was going. Neither in spirit nor in body did he know. But he was very sure of one thing. Before the trail was ended he would burst through that crust which sheltered Tempest, even if Tempest killed him for it.

The sun was yet high, though Tempest's watch said half-past six, when the three canoes dropped away from Fort Resolution, threading through the big and little channels that harry the many island shores. The sun laid its broad gold on their faces or on their neck-napes as they wound right and left, with the birds calling past them from island to island and all the warm wet scents of trees and earth blowing fresh in their nostrils. There was enough wind to keep the mosquitoes off, and the canoes cut their way strongly with the dipping paddles sending light-flashes far over the streaming water.

Leaf-of-the-woods, crouched with her children in a little crazy dug-out, and paddling heavily back to her home on a distant island, looked up as the canoes swept by, with the sun glinting on tunic-buttons and badges, and making ruddy the firm-lipped, keen-eyed faces. Exactly what Tempest had done for her she could not comprehend; but she understood that in some mysterious way he had assured those coveted five dollars to the sleeping child at her feet. She halted the paddle in her dusky, dirty little hands; staring, round-eyed and un-

emotional. Tempest smiled as he went by. He was kneeling bare-headed, with the wind in his thick chestnut hair and his strong neck stiffened for the thrust and swing of the paddle. Leaf-of-the-woods gave no response. She did not think about it. Tempest was something so utterly alien to her; so completely outside her life and her comprehension. He scarcely seemed a man among men to Leaf-of-the-woods. He was more like some undefined force, as all the white men who trod and looked as he did were. She watched him pass with a kind of indifference, and when the islands hid him she took up her paddle again and worked her stolid way home.

Tempest forgot her in a struggle to clear a snag round the next corner. But the thing which he had done before the Treaty tent at Fort Resolution meant more than either the white man or the brown girl knew. For it was earnest of that deeper, more impersonal fathering which Tempest was later to give to the land he loved.

Through the evening haze a tall York boat grew out of the blue distance with its patched sail drawing feebly in the fitful wind. It was crowded with the Yellow Knives and Dog Rib Indians, going in to Fort Resolution for Treaty Payment. Idly they sat or lay about the decking; long-haired, loose-limbed, indifferent, except where one boy sprang up on a thwart, holding a little girl on his broad shoulder. A red handkerchief was bound about the boy's head; and his shrill hail, broken across by the drop of his voice to a man's depth, came curiously over the empty waters. Then they too fell away into the past, and Dick turned his eyes to the man ahead of him again.

He had watched each one of those swarthy, dark-eyed faces with the lightningly-keen glance which was his by nature. He knew that he would look so at every man he passed—until he found Ducane. The order to go and look for Ducane until he found him would have been very nearly the greatest joy earth could have given him now. But, because it was denied, he knew the matter only lengthened by a little. If Ducane lived he would find him. If Ducane died he would know of it. Concerning this matter he had the strange intuition which occasionally comes to men who have relied all their lives on chance.

The Lake, wide and moaning as the sea, was dark with the wrath of an eastern wind that night. But it was no darker than Tempest's spirit as he walked the stony ridge behind their island camp, forgetful of the mosquito-smudges, and remembering only that he had at last taken the decisive step away from civilisation and from all knowledge of Andree.

He knew Andree now very much for what she was. But that had only changed his love. He no longer thought of her

a wife. To him she was, and always would be, just Grange's Andree; a thing half-human and wholly dear—a thing which the very soul of him longed to protect and which he could not touch, could not help, could not shield.

He looked down the slope to the sleeping bodies round the mosquito-smudge, and knew instantly which of them was Dick. He had lain round camp-fires with him too often not to know how Dick always slept on his side, with one knee bent and fingers curving for the revolver-butt; quick to spring up on the instant at any unusual sound. He was so quick always, this man whom Tempest had loved and trusted. So quick with his laugh and his love and his generous impulses. Tempest had loved Dick because he was Dick, never halting to consider that Dick might treat him as he had treated other men. And now Dick had done it; done it with the usual callous indifference which he showed at most crises of his life; done it with mocking eyes and a lie on his mouth.

In Tempest there was so such mad mixture of rogue and martyr and devil, of sin and renunciation and selfishness and reverence as tormented Dick. There was no little cynical imp of humour in his blood to teach him how to jest at his soul and at all other things which hurt him. Dick possessed that imp. Without it he could not have served the Law which he derided, nor found such good joy in life still. Tempest had none of that spark to keep the fire of his days burning. He knew, as all the world's chosen men know (and there are many more of them than the world ever finds out) that, having endured the suffering, it was his plain duty as immortal man to find the remedy and to apply it until he could stand upon his feet again, sane and cured, and fit for the work which was to fit him for the future.

But he knew to-night, as he had known so many times through the last months, that as yet he could not do it. He had first to stamp out his hate of Dick, and all the outraged, betrayed friendship in him fought instinctively against that.

He went down to the fire again; took his blanket, and wrapped it round him. A breed was raised on his elbow, throwing more wood on the fire. The flickering light went playing hide-and-seek across the faces of the sleeping men, bringing the semblance of laughter to Dick's mouth. Tempest turned his back on him and lay down. But that mocking laughter chased him through his dreams and spoiled his rest.

The morning broke, wet and squally, with a following wind that ran them with taut sails down to the grey angry line of rough water that began the Traverse. Far off the small, bare islands that flanked the shore were lost in haze, and the naked width of the Great Slave Lake was like a rimless sea about them. The canoes seemed absurdly inadequate and

frail to take that passage; but the breeds slid into it, indifferently, with the assured skill of their kind, and the white men's canoes followed, as snaky and alert as they. The rising wind blew up a sea that threatened danger, and the next two hours were full of it. With tunics flung aside, and sleeves rolled, and hats off every man laboured for his life, and the crested waves about them allowed no rest, any more than the stalking Indian of an earlier day had allowed rest to the free-traders who were marked down for punishment on that long Traverse of an earlier day.

They were dripping with rain and lake-water, exhausted, and stiff with the muscle-ache when they hauled to shore again, two hours later. But the great Traverse was passed, and the beginning of a new world was before them. Dick knew something of that world already. He had trodden part of it himself, and from the tribes gathered in Fort Resolution he had learnt much more. For Fort Resolution is the book which holds the largest and the biggest chapter of the story of Fur. From there men go north to the Barren Lands to hunt the musk ox: from there fur of marten, of wolverine, of brown bear and ermine, and many more go south in the close-pressed bales, by steamer and by portage and by the tracker's pull. And from there, all round about it, the trails of the sturdy hunters drive out into the silences over chartless hundreds of miles.

At Fond du Lac was a deserted post of the Hudson Bay Company. They left it to rot its way back to the earth again, and followed up the narrowing lake until Charlton Harbour marked the end of it and the beginning of that which all men knew to be the real test of flesh and spirit.

That night's camp was among a cluster of empty tepees on the lonely shore whence white-man tread and white-man voices had departed so long ago. The tepees were used as a half-way camp by the Dog Ribs and Yellow Knives going into Fort Resolution for the yearly Treaty Payments, and the signs of recent occupation were plain on them. Dick prowled through their dirty silences that night; but he found nothing of moment except a puppy with a broken leg. He put the leg into adequate splints and fed to it the raw moosemeat brought from the Fort; and Tempest, seeing, marvelled as he had so often marvelled before, at the strong line of distinction which this man drew between human nature and the animal.

The black flies and the mosquitoes hailed them before the sun shot up to presage a hot, airless day. And then, under the blaze of it and attended by a mighty murmuring, stabbing army, they began that portaging which was to stay with them in larger or lesser degree throughout the rest of the journey.

This three-mile portage over the divide that parted the two

lakes had been beaten hard by the passing of the fur hunters through uncounted years on their way to Fort Resolution. It lay between low close forest where the mosquitoes hung like an awning, and it climbed a six-hundred feet slope in the sun where the blackflies made patterns on the white stony earth. In four days they had travelled a distance of over sixty miles across that three-mile portage; and Myers vented some opinions as he flung the last tightly-rolled pack on the crest of the divide where the little lake lay, and rubbed the aching muscles of his neck.

"I'm thinkin' as it were some joker called us the Mounted Police," he said. "We're 'orses, bloomin' 'orses, that's what we are. An' this darned strap"—he pulled viciously at the leather loop which hung from his Stetson hat to the curve of the skull—"this are our bridle, on'y we hadn't oughter be wearin' it behind."

Depache, the tall French-Canadian, eased his shoulders from the pressure of the canoe-paddles which had been strapped across the canoe-thwarts so as to enable him to carry the whole thing on his head.

"Bien," he said. "You will soon not be so fat. I did never see a man sweat as you do sweat. It is wonderful."

Myers grunted, beating the swarming flies from hands and face.

"Guess me an' Heriot is a-goin' ter hev good strong boards ter shelter us in a while," he remarked. "Wot you an' th' Inspector want wi' keepin' yer faces bare ter be bit I can't see. Tommy-rot, I calls it."

"C'est en règle," said Depache, and shrugged his shoulders.

He could not have explained why he and Tempest found no day too hard nor too long but that they could take from it five minutes for a cold-water shave and three more to brush their hair. But Tempest knew. There is something in man which makes it unwise for him to let go of the outer usages of refinement to which he has been accustomed. Insensibly those refinements keep awake the like in the heart, though outward conditions may batter on both. At no time is it more necessary for some men to hold on to their inner self-respect by according outward respect to their body than in the desolate places where there is none to shame them if they fall. Tempest brushed his clothes daily. He washed out the coarse flannel shirt of the day's wear each night; and through all the dust and the sweating heat and the loathsome crawling flies he walked with the cleanly-groomed alertness which he carried in the barrack-yard. He dared not let go of that, for he had lost too much else; and Depache, blindly copying the man to whom he gave a silent, unobtrusive worship, bore his head the higher for it also.

Dick and Myers frankly sloughed conventionalities on every possible point. They were strong as brown bears and restless as foxes. While Tempest wrote up his diary or did his washing, and Depache, roaming the wind-swept shore, sang his pathetic lumber-camp songs in clipped French, Dick and Myers caught the long, coarse trout of the Great Slave, or the abundant whitefish, or hunted game along the shores, and found none. Dick had his own physical pain on those burning days of the portage-trail. His walk had not the spring of Tempest's, and the sand and the stone of the way seared his feet through the moccasin-soles until every step meant the negotiation of a separate hill of torment.

Tempest did not know of this until the last of those four days, when Depache and Myers were swimming in the little lake that lipped the knees of the sparse trees with so different a sound from the thunder of the Slave, and Dick, in the smoke of the mosquito-smudge, was mending a tear in his tunic by button-clips and talking idle animal-talk to the splint-legged dog at his elbow. Tempest came out of his tent, and looked round.

"Where are the men?" he asked.

"Swimming," said Dick, and did not look up.

"Was that little black leather case of mine put into your tent? It came up in the last packs to-day."

"Yes. I chucked it down with my dunnage somewhere." Dick stood up to go to his tent, and Tempest stopped him.

"I can get it," he said. "Tell me where it is."

"Thank you," said Dick dryly. "I prefer to overhaul my personal belongings myself."

Tempest flushed, biting his lips. But his eyes followed the man into the second tent, and when Dick brought the case it was not of it that Tempest spoke.

"What have you been doing to your feet?" he asked.

"Nothing." Dick took up his work and sat down again.

"You'll be good enough to answer me more civilly," said Tempest, and for a moment his voice shook. "What is wrong with your feet?"

"I burnt them portaging." Dick looked up. "When I cry out it will be time enough for you to fuss over me."

Tempest understood all that look and words meant. They angered him.

"I should have imagined you knew enough by now to take care of your feet," he said sharply.

Dick sought among the odds and ends of fishing-line, buttons, floats, oiled rags and other things that were stuffed into a battered little embroidered silk bag made for him years since by some girl whose name he had forgotten. He had carried that bag for sentimental reasons at first. Later on it

had become a familiar. Now it was about the one thing which might be said to represent home to him. Other things passed and were replaced ; but the little faded bag survived in some way which he never took the trouble to account for.

" Be easy," he said, and detached another clip from a melting lump of cobbler's wax. " I will get through my work as well as the next man."

He kept his word unconcernedly and to the letter. But it hurt Tempest more than he had believed he could be hurt now to watch those limping feet on the many portages that linked up lake after lake until the long waters of Artillery Lake stretched before them, gleaming delicate mauve and silver under the dying day. Dick had been this way before on a lone patrol, filled only with the cheerful exultance of a hunter who keeps a difficult trail. Now he dropped his pack on the camping-ground ; straightened with an effort ; rubbed his hot hands over his hotter face, and looked out across the peaceful water. At his side Depache said gently :

" Mary Mother ! But it is like w'en de bells of San Michel do call us to pray at home."

Dick heard, but he did not speak. The great spreading calm of the water ; the pure air, warm and soothing where it blew in his face ; the quiet, bare hill-spaces dimming to dusk, and the one grove of trees about him where the dark thickened, brought more rest into his fretted weary mind than he had known for long. Unmoving he stood, with his face changing and softening. Then he turned, loosed the straps round his pack, and went back over the hundred-yard portage for a second load.

That night the real keepers of the Silences waked and walked about the two little tents along the lake-shore. Dick, hearing the faint familiar call and the soft clicking of hoofed feet, saw them first. Then he crawled to the tent-opening and lay there, watching. In twos and threes and in dozens they passed and re-passed him ; the full-grown caribou bull standing mightily with his antlers clear-cut on the pallor of the lake ; the slender does, stepping lightly and turning their dappled necks to left and right, and the young bulls halting now and again to butt each other with their sprouting horns and then rushing off with exaggerated snorts of fear. All along the lake-lip they drank and clustered ; parted and came again. The smell of their warm, furry bodies and of the mud they churned up in the swampy places came strongly to Dick ; and the murmuring, whimpering sounds of them ; the sharp scuffles and the occasional deep note of warning struck home to the very core of the man's heart.

It was only among the creatures of the wild that the savage was wiped out of him and the unquestioning simplicity of

their lives filled his own. He stood up presently, and went to them; walking softly, and keeping in the shadow. And then, ahead, where the naked sides of the lake slid to the water, he saw a thing which he once had seen before, and for a moment he wondered if the turbulent years between were nightmare only, and if this endless army of stately-treading bulls who crossed the ridge against the sky, descended, and breasted the lake one after one, was not the same army, even as this was the same night which he had passed here five full years ago.

Depache's soft, melancholy tones spoke below him as they lay in the grass.

"Dieu! They are like the angels of Heaven for multitude."

And then Dick laughed: a smothered, heart-whole laugh such as he had not known these many days. For the surging, crested horns that split the water above the dark swimming bodies looked devilish entirely among the naked hills and the barren waters. Both men lay still until Depache's long body grew chilled, and he crept back through the grass to the tent. But Dick clung to his spur-top yet, keen-eared for the distant splash where a great bull took the water; for the soft rushing sound as he swam steadily; for the flapping shake of his great body as he landed. In the utter stillness sound carried far, and Dick's ears were quick as those of the hunter must be. And his eyes were quick. That sweeping, endless river of the life which belongs to the solitudes was distinct and very dear to him. Year by year the caribou took their trails and came again: stately, unafraid, unchanging; seeking the reindeer-moss and the tree-branch and the waters of some unnamed lake for drink. Homeless, drifting ever from North to South and back, they were yet the rightful masters of this land; the sentry-go of the Barren Grounds; the guard along the frontier.

In a very few days Dick and the men with him would be across that frontier where once, years before, he and Tempest had trodden together. But when they were gone and the North closed up into its long sleep the caribou would still be there, moving in their countless ranks over the noiseless whiteness.

In the days that came after, the northern limit of trees was passed and the Barren Grounds only lay left and right and north to the Arctic Seas. Here the wind dropped, and the sun poured heat down steadily, until the mosquitoes and flies clung about them in thick, stupid swarms, bringing blood on every naked part, and the clayey, untrodden portages slid and quaked beneath the tread, letting the feet through to clogging mud and water that sometimes caught the ankles and flung the man forward violently. Up the Cusba River they

tracked the canoes among snarling rapids. In open reaches sudden, stiff winds bore them back to barren shores that held no anchorage. The one lonely little Indian camp they passed was far behind, and the four men moved alone in the hand of the elements and of the God Who made them.

But the fat mosquito-bitten Myers had unfailing jokes for every good or evil; Depache sang his little plaintive French-Canadian songs, untroubled by wind or rain; and the dangerous, alert look softened in Dick's eyes before the touch of the outer places on his soul, and he told his casual yarns of the things he had seen and had done as easily in the cold, wind-beaten tent as round the jovial camp-fires of the south. Tempest's men had been picked with skill, and he had reason to approve the judgment. They were men right through, these roughened, sweating, blood-smudged ruffians who took the tracking-line or the portage-pack, the paddle, the oar, or the straining stays of the sail, cheerfully and without comment, at his word. And he, knowing himself for the king-bolt of the company, laboured with all the inward courage left him to take his part manfully in the daily trials that no man knows until he comes to face them for himself.

The days dropped away, remembered only by "that noon when we couldn't make a landing, and had no dinner"; or, "the night it blew too hard to pitch the tents, and we slept under the canoes"; or, "that bloomin' day what was all portages an' we unloaded an' loaded up again five times." And then, when a short month was done, they came to the portage on the Height of Land, with rivers and ground falling eastward into Hudson Bay.

They camped on Height of Land portage that night; round a fire made of driftwood worn and light from long beating on these barren shores, and of moss which Dick searched for, and, knowing well the use of, brought back to the fire in great cakes. It gave out a musty smell to the night, and Myers declared that it made the tea taste. But the flavour was good to Dick, and the wild night blowing up dark on the naked wastes about him was good. For the belief was quickening in his mind—day by day, and hour by hour—that when he touched to the haunts of men again he would find Ducane.

Through all those miles from Fort Resolution, which were only about three hundred and seventy on the survey map, although the portages had piled them up to almost as many more, Dick's mind held sleeplessly to the thought of Ducane. While his senses exulted in the smell of the rivers; in the deep-trod spore of deer on the shores; in the high, white stars that strung themselves across the curve of the great sky; in the winds that blew out of the unbreathed spaces round the

Pole, his brain was still planning the capture of Ducane. By force of will he had thrust Jennifer into the background. It maddened him to think of her, and therefore he would not think of her.

He took his skill in his work for his fetish again, finding the very salt of life in it. The try-pit wherein he had been welded, with strong blows and white-hot searing fire, had not left him with much mercy towards himself or other men. Law, duty, discipline had meant practically nothing to him until he saw the beauty of them in Tempest's hands. Now, even through his pain in connection with this man, it appealed to his pride and his humour to know that he, the morally-derelict, had whipped Tempest back into the straight path, and that Tempest was treading it, faithfully, if not with the glorying delight of old.

In some way which he did not try to fathom, this knowledge awakened Dick's understanding of what he owed the thing to which he had given his oath. It began to lose the vague semblance of a burden to be slipped when possible; a lesson to be got up with a crib; a factor which had no value, no interest except where it concerned his private self. Step by step, out here among these mighty forces which could crush him so lightly, the personal sloughed off and the impersonal grew more real. What he was doing; what Tempest was doing; what every man and woman who bent their will to accept law and restraint and discipline throughout the universe was doing, could not be a little thing. In the bulk it was bigger than Destiny itself, because it was the only force which could overcome what humanity knows as Destiny. It was the only force which could raise the world when done from purified motives.

Dick had never done anything from a purified motive in his life, although the delivering of Tempest had been near it in the beginning. Now, with his clear inner sight, he knew that he probably never would do anything from that motive. He knew that when he found Ducane he would delight to see the man cringe and whimper to him. He would delight to kick Ducane up on to his feet and keep him there by the goad. He had suffered too much through Jennifer's husband ever to forgive him, and he knew well that he was going to suffer, so long as he or Ducane lived. And then suddenly, Myers, passing him on the portage, halted, peering into his face with little twinkling, blue eyes.

"Who was you a-settin' out to kill jus' now?" he demanded.

"Black flies," said Dick, and scooped his hand down his stinging neck. "Like Joab and Joshua and the rest, I've been slaying my thousands and tens of thousands."

Myers grunted.

"Looks like the smell o' blood don't sicken you any," he said, and went on.

There was a curious affinity between the cheerful little Cockney and Dick. Myers had served in the Yukon Territory during the mining rush, and there were several passages in his life which he found it convenient to forget. But he had learnt there how to seek for the inner values in a man, knowing them to be different utterly from the side he faces the world with. Like Dick there were times when the man in him grew tired of strife, and turned boyishly to the boyish equivalent for birds'-nesting and chasing cats; and together they sought these equivalents now; trolling for the great red trout at foot of the rapids; whipping the water for grayling; hunting caribou when fresh meat was needed; and chasing the cat (which was Depache) when opportunity occurred.

No power on earth could ruffle Depache's gentle melancholy into a storm. When Dick and Myers cursed the flies and the damp heat along the ragged streams and boulders that broke the portages, and yet would not allow canoe-work; when they swore at the windy nights; at the infinitely desolate hills where only the moss and a few handfuls of grass in the bottoms offered fuel; when, rising to giddy peaks of profanity, they vowed that they would feed no more biscuit to the stomachs that desired bread—bread, and could make no fire wherewith to bake it; then Depache would look at them, sad-eyed, and interested.

"But I could never think of all those words, moi," he would say, and drift off to sing his little songs contentedly.

By the nature of things Tempest stood somewhat alone throughout this patrol. Birth and position placed him apart, and his temper just now kept him there. He did his work accurately, both in the physical and mental branches; and what he thought about he kept to himself. Once Dick saw him handling his revolver with rather unnecessary interest, and he walked past noisily, meaning to make Tempest look up. Tempest did not look up. He put the revolver back in its case and snapped it shut. But Dick carried the memory of that little scene away with him, and he did not forget it.

In Tempest's place he would have used that revolver on the other man. He knew that if Tempest used it he would use it on himself, and that thought kept his mind busy, even through the keen disappointment when the patch of spruce wood promised by an early survey map as growing on the shores of Sifton Lake turned out, after much searching, to be soft ground spruce, of hardly greater value than the moss. Over that spruce Myers lost his temper fully for the first time. He flung himself on it, tearing it up by the stringy roots, and consigning it to hotter flames than that by which he had

hoped to bake his bread. Then, exhausted, he went down the hill, climbed into his canoe, and took up the paddle again.

"Makes a man wish he was a bloomin' caribou," he said. "They can get their fill off of moss—*moss*, an' like it."

Once, through a grey evening on the Thelon, they came on a musk-ox, lying like a great earth-clod on the flank of a naked hill. He raced across it when their shouts woke him, and the long hair that swept the ground waved and fluttered round him like rags shaken in the wind. He was the one piece of life they had seen that day, and the barren stretches seemed more desolate without him.

And then, slow and slow, came promise of life again. Grass blowing thick along the foreshores; heavy timber skirting the banks; sea-gulls and musk-ox; brown bears sauntering under the sunset; wolverine and foxes crying in the night. On a portage Dick kicked up a carved bone of Esquimaux workmanship. He thrust it into his tunic and trudged on with a new light shining in his eyes. Before long, before very long, he would know if the stamping-grounds of these eastern Esquimaux sheltered Ducane.

It was a year and two months since Ducane had disappeared; and as he had not been found among the peopled roadways of the land, it followed that he must have fled to the waste places. And as the place where a white man can find means of existence are rather clearly defined in Canada, Dick knew that he must be along the river trail if he had gone east. He could not leave the country undetected by any of the northern ways, and Dick did not believe that he would dare to face the congested places of the south. He knew too many men, and would be known by too many. And never for one instant did Dick think him dead. He felt instinctively that he would have known if it had been so. And he felt, almost as instinctively, that it would be for him to find Ducane and carry him back to that justice which he had baffled so long. He owed it to Jennifer; he owed it to himself; he owed it to the work which was beginning to mean more to him than ever before.

Already winter was chasing them with sounding feet; flinging white frost to greet them when they turned out from their tents each morning, and spreading soft creaking ice-films before the canoe-prows. The heat of midday swept it off; but each morning it lasted longer, and each evening it came more early. The tentacles of the North were pushing down to annex its own again. Little by little the land was closing up behind them. Already the Mackenzie River would have shut down, and Herschel be settling into its seven months of rigidity. The keen, glad breath of the mornings put new vigour to the men; the flies were dead, and the long, hard

miles of labour had tightened thew and muscle, and sweated off superfluous flesh until there was nothing left but a tense, springy strength that seemed never to tire.

And then, one hot midday when the river ran fast between tall, naked cliffs, the canoes swung round a bluff and found an anchorage before a knot of deerskin tepees where Esquimaux women were working. Dick's heart was in his throat as he went with Tempest up to the tepees. But there was nothing for him there. All the men were away at Fullerton, trading fur and carvings with the whalers, and the little information which the laughing, flat-faced women could give in their broken English suggested no knowledge of a white man among them.

Tempest stopped to admire the sleek, alert, husky dogs which made the sledge-teams.

"About as different from an Indian dog as day from night," he said. "I shouldn't wonder if we weren't wishing we had 'em before long."

"Why!" Dick was startled. "Don't you imagine we will catch the steamer at Chesterfield or Fullerton?" he asked.

"Can't say." Tempest turned on his heel. "Winter seems likely to be early, and I am afraid it's going to take us all our time——"

And then he forgot Dick, and stood watching Depache down on his long knees among the greasy, chuckling babies who rolled on the stamped ground without the tepees.

Depache was cuddling those babies and kissing them. He made bobbing rabbits for them out of his ragged handkerchief. He tickled them and laughed as the fat, good-natured mothers laughed, and Tempest went away to camp with a sudden, surprised understanding in him. Shut in on his own troubles, it had never struck him that this gentle, serenely obedient man had been famishing for something to fondle; something to take care of. Tempest remembered now how Depache had begged for the broken-legged dog, and how he had gone away by himself when Tempest had refused him. For all the rigid laws and the strenuous man-life to which they had submitted themselves, there was yet something strangely young and uneradicable in these lives under his hand. Dick and Myers wanted their boy-games, though their eyes and the lines round their mouths could tell how much they knew of men. The soft, melancholy Depache, who was stronger than Tempest himself, wanted some little helpless thing to pet and kiss. Of what Tempest himself wanted he did not dare to think. He went back to camp, and wrote up his diary.

Along the Thelon River old cut trees told where Esquimaux camps had been. For the Indians never stray so far from the

western fur-trading posts, and the Esquimaux make no permanent homes in the woods. The open country where the snow packs hard beneath the dog-trains and the caribou run in their endless herds are dearer to them by far.

There were fish and deer and musk-ox in plenty where the following winter chased the little patrol east and ever east into Hudson Bay. Sweeps of utterly barren country were interspersed with heavy timber; deserted camps showed nakedly among the spruces; and the thickly-crossed spores of little and big fur animals were everywhere. Under sail they crossed Beverley Lake at the foot of the Thelon River, and saw at the far end of it a large Esquimaux camp where men came down to greet them among the barking huskies and the women and children.

Dick knelt without moving in the stern of his canoe while Tempest called a welcome, and the answers came in unusually good English. He was wondering why that husky man, who was broader and taller than any on the beach, had gone suddenly into a half-hidden tepee and dropped the skin flap behind him. And yet, in his own heart, he did not really wonder. He swung his canoe alongside Tempest's and spoke to him, very low.

"Can't we make camp here?" he said. "For I believe I have just seen Ducane."

CHAPTER XV.

"THE BARREN GROUNDS."

Up the stony beach and among the sparse, ragged timber many Esquimaux women were working: cutting deer flesh into long strips, pounding them flat, and hanging them over the poles that ran between forked sticks in the sun. Others were scraping the skins and stretching them on frames. On the left some men were making a kyak; sewing the skin across the ribs of the boat with the leg-tendons of the caribou. There were many dogs, fat and healthy-looking; and the brown smoked skin tepees seemed whole and prosperous. Tempest glanced sideways at Dick. He knew the man's powers of deduction too well to doubt him.

"Where?" he asked.

"Slinking into one of those tepees. Can I go after him?"

There was an eager, almost wolf-like note in face and voice. Tempest recoiled from it, thinking of Ducane's wife. He looked up at the chief of the camp who was talking to Myers in surprisingly effective English.

"You have a white man here?" he said.

The Esquimaux nodded and smiled.

"Oh, so. Him Sleepy-face. Me Good-night." He patted his broad breast. "Dat my wife mak' deer-meat 'crost dere. She Sunshine. Dat Sleepy-face wife too be'ind. She Sweet Muffin."

Dick turned to look at Sweet Muffin. She sat on the ground beside a great hunch of the deer-meat with her fur-wrapped legs under her and the loose fur skirt tucked up round her fat, swathed body. She was chewing a bit of the meat as she worked, and her bright eyes glanced in her flat, greasy face. Swiftly she cut off slice after slice, and flung it to the next woman who pounded it out on a stone. Then they laughed together; musically, happily. Dick unfolded his legs and stood up in his canoe.

"May I go after Ducane?" he asked, and his voice was dangerously quiet.

"Why, certainly," said Tempest. "And don't waste time. Every hour is valuable now. Do you want any help?"

"No, thanks," said Dick. "I'd rather go alone."

He walked up among the sniffing dogs and the roly-poly children with long, swift steps. He had no weapon with him, and he knew why he could use none to Jennifer's husband, no matter what the provocation might be. But he did not expect any fight from Ducane. He would have given almost anything he had if he could have expected it. But he knew the bed-rock cowardice of the man too well.

Past a large, well-shaped tepee with its chimney-fly smoked deep chocolate he reached the smaller, half-hidden one into which the big man had disappeared. He had not taken his eyes from that tepee since the man went in, and he knew that his chances of finding Ducane there were considerable. Ducane would not have expected even those hawk-eyes to search him out in that one instant of time.

He lifted the skin flap of the tepee; stooped, and walked in. It was dark and it smelt infinitely. Dick blew his nostrils out in disgust. Ducane had never been a dainty man; but this was worse than was necessary.

"Anyone here?" he asked.

There was no sound. He struck a match, and looked round. Under his feet lay strips of wood, caribou-bones, fishing-nets, long needles, and other litter. In the back of the tent furs were piled untidily. It might have been the flicker of the match, but Dick fancied that the skins moved—just once.

"Gone to earth on the chance," said his brain. Then he strode over and took up two great handfuls of the skins.

"You'd best come out of that, Ducane," he said. "I'm here, you know."

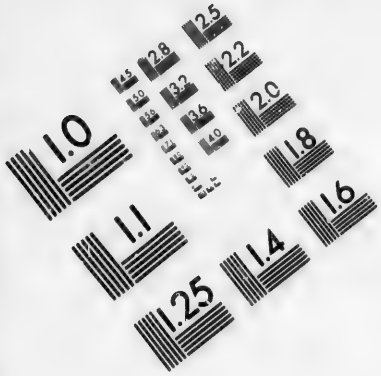
There was still no sound, no sight of life. Dick let the match drop, and reefed up another armful of the softly-cured, odorous deer-skins, kicking at the same time. And then something rolled out on the earth at his feet; cursing, whimpering, clutching at him, mixing prayers and blasphemy like a man demented. Dick jerked himself free in a more virulent rage than had ever possessed him in his life. It was this thing—this thing that rolled on the earth and cried, which separated him from Jennifer.

"Get up," he said between his teeth. "Get up, you cur. Get up."

"Dick, you're making a mistake," whimpered Ducane. "Robison was deeper dipped than me. On my soul he was. And he's dead. They must have turned him off long ago. Why can't you——"

"In the devil's name—get up!" said Dick, and there was something in his voice which brought Ducane shaking and murmuring to his feet.

"You can't imprison me," he blustered. "I'll turn King's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evidence. I've thought the whole thing out. There are others in it. I'll give you their names. But I won't go to prison. I won't put on that damned prison dress. It would kill me. Oh!—you! What did you come here for, you——"

"That's better." Dick was taking his breath in long gulps. "Oh, Lord; if you'd only hit me!" he said.

"How did you know I was here?" Even in the close dark Dick knew that the man was wringing his hands and rocking like a woman in despair. "Jenny never told you. She was a good wife to me, Jenny was. She wouldn't tell you. Unless you made her! Did you make her? By Heaven, if you bullied Jenny——"

Dick was interested. There was a spark of manhood in this creature yet, then. And it flamed at memory of the woman whom he had left to bear the weight of his disgrace while he lived in a skin tepee with Sweet Muffin.

"Suppose I did?" he said, and every muscle was twitching with longing to come to grips with this man who was Jennifer's husband.

But Ducane had slid back on the earth again; spurting into occasional imprecations and falling silent again in utter fear. He was like a damp fuse, and Dick had no time to wait for him to light up again.

"That's enough," he said. "Come on. You're camping with us to-night, Ducane, and the canoes are waiting outside. I guess you'll help carry them over the next portages. We're bound for Regina, Ducane, and you'll be very welcome there, I'm sure. Are you going to get up?"

There was neither bodily nor mental muscle left in the man. He had become obsessed with the dread of prison, and he prayed to Dick until Dick's very ears burnt with shame.

"Why can't you leave me alone? I'm not doing any harm up here. Robison's dead. He must be dead. And I'll give you the names of the company. There's John W. Harker, of ——Dick! Oh, my God! Dick!"

In lieu of a handcuff Dick had taken a piece of fishing-line from his pocket, whipped it round Ducane's wrist, and twisted it there with the strength of his own fingers. It did not hurt their iron-hard sinews; but it sank into Ducane's soft flesh like a string into cheese. Ducane sprang up with a yell and incoherent ravings. Dick laughed softly.

"Why," he said, "I'm not beginning to hurt yet. But a special patrol of Canada is being kept waiting for you, Ducane, and I don't consider it polite to let it wait any longer. Do you prefer to be led out like a puppy on a string?"

Ducane took a step. Then he halted. Dread of the dock

with that mocking, lazy voice swearing away his liberty swept over him. He lurched sideways, smashing a heavy blow right into Dick's face. Dick carried the mark under his left eye for months, and he never ceased to regret that Ducane did not follow it up with another. He certainly gave Ducane a glad and cordial invitation; but the man backed away, muttering, "You want to kill me, do you?" and then he followed his captor out into the sunlight.

Half-way down the beach Dick stopped.

"You can go and say good-bye to your wife," he said.

For the first time he saw shame on Ducane's face.

"No," he said sullenly; and Dick shrugged his shoulders.

"As you like," he said indifferently, and led on down to the canoes.

Tempest made the necessary explanations to Good-night, and the uniforms did the rest. Good-night was troubled. Prestige left him with the passing of the white man. But he gave permission graciously, if reluctantly, and watched the canoes shoot round the grey bend of the river with curiosity on his good-humoured face.

"Dat white man go straight to Sleepy-face like a wolf to de kill," he said. "Now, why?"

Tempest was heart-sick to see the utter letting-go of all traditions of manhood in Ducane, the man who had once been outwardly his equal. He kept away from him whenever occasion allowed. Myers and Depache did the same; very much as dogs who sniff suspiciously and from a distance at a stranger in the camp whom they have been forbidden to touch. But Dick seemed to find actual pleasure in this derelict thing which he had salvaged. Often Tempest caught him watching the other man in speculative interest, as a cat watches a mouse; and he was repelled and utterly disgusted, not understanding that Dick was learning this man through and through in order that he might be able to guard Jennifer against him at all points.

Except Ducane no man in the little patrol ever complained. But, according to Myers' often-asserted belief "that waster growls enough fer a 'ole bloomin' regimint. Why don't Inspector make 'im take 'is turn o' 'oldin' the bloomin' canoes?"

This was to Dick after Dick had stood thigh-deep in icy water, hanging on to his canoe that it might not bang itself to pieces on the rocky landing before the others could load it up. Tempest had done the same for his, and the day before that duty had fallen on Myers and Depache. For all the earth was wild and barren and lonely now. Trees had gone with the Thelon River, and moss was far to seek and little to find after much labour. Dick laughed.

" Why, he takes his turn at eating the bannock, anyway," he said, and Myers departed in fervent profanity.

Very soon Tempest discovered that Ducane had neither the strength for the portages nor the physical courage for the rapids, and he was sick always when they put the sails up and charged into choppy water. And, because he did not work, the chill of his constantly-wetted clothes struck in to the marrow of him, until Tempest feared sometimes that a real sickness would force an indefinite halt on these Barren Grounds.

It was on the night following a long and dangerous day of shooting the rapids, where the river fell with sharp zigzags between tall, naked cliffs into Baker Lake, that Dick came to Tempest.

" Have you the dope-box handy ? " he said. " Ducane has cramp in the stomach, and he doesn't appear to be liking it any."

Tempest caught up the little medicine-chest and went over to the tent which Ducane shared with Myers and Dick. He sent Myers across to sleep with Depache, and, with Dick, he did what he could for the suffering man. But Ducane was seized with the terrors of the damned. He believed that he was dying, and his agony of mind and body was a painful thing for Tempest to witness. It did not seem to trouble Dick. He did all that he could for the man where he rolled and screamed and cursed ; but when he began to call on his wife's name Tempest saw a dangerous glitter in Dick's eyes for a moment. Ducane started up suddenly.

" Robison is dead ? " he cried. " You told me Robison was dead."

" Why, yes," said Tempest soothingly. " But you're not going to die. I've seen men much worse than you, and they got over it. Take some more of this, Ducane."

" You've never seen men make more row about it," said Dick. " How are we to tell if it's pain or only fright ? "

" Then—if Robison's dead." Ducane was writhing and jerking out his words brokenly. " All these months he's had no masses said for his soul—and I'm dying—and I promised—I swore that I'd go to hell if I broke my word——"

" Be easy," said Dick. " I expect your word won't make so much difference as you think. And you don't mean to tell me that you have the elements of religion in you ? "

He was kneeling by the mattress and his lean, dark face showed mockingly interested in the faint, blurring light of the candle-lantern. Ducane turned his head from it.

" I don't know," he moaned. " Robison had. I suppose a man needs some religion when he's going to die."

This was O'Hara's cry, and the repetition of it struck Dick unpleasantly.

"Tempest," cried Ducane. "Tempest! Come here. I'll tell you. I won't tell that——. He'd give his word and break it before the breath was out of my body. Tempest!"

"All right. All right." Tempest's quiet, steady voice came into the following torrent of curses and cries. "I'm here. What is it you want to tell me, Ducane?"

He took Dick's place by the mattress, and Dick stood up, holding the weak light so that the two faces shone on the gloom for him: Ducane's, with ragged beard and staring eyes and white haggard skin and a hand that fumbled incessantly at his trembling lips; Tempest's, with the well-poised head, the thick hair pushed back from the square forehead, the healthily-brown, finely-cut, grave face. It seemed to him that he had never really seen Tempest's physical beauty until he saw it in contrast with Ducane. Then Ducane began to speak, and his words were broken with the sobbing of a child and the curses of a man.

"I didn't want to have his blood on my hands. But it was the price. If he got off and shut the mouth of the Quatre Fourches Indians—it was the price——"

"He was to save your skin if you saved his soul," interpreted Dick.

"I didn't want ——" A spasm halted Ducane, and then he continued with the tears running down his face. "How could I get at a priest out here? How could I give him the paper? But I promised. There were to be masses for his soul—not as a murderer——"

Tempest remembered afterwards how just then Dick's hand bore heavily down on his shoulder, and Dick said:

"Let me take your place. Let me hear what he has to say. This is my business—not yours."

Tempest shook him off.

"Be quiet," he said. "What is that, Ducane? Robison *was* a murderer, you remember. He murdered Ogilvie."

"No, he didn't. I don't want his blood—but how could I get at a priest out here——"

Sharp and clear before his brain-sight Dick was seeing the face of Grange's Andree when he had asked her in Grange's back-parlour why she was crying. He interrupted again.

"Tempest, will you let me——"

"Will you hold your tongue?" said Tempest impatiently. "How do you know this, Ducane? Do you mean to say we've hung an innocent man? Who killed Ogilvie if it wasn't Robison?"

"Oh, my God!" said Dick, in nearer prayer than he had used in his life before. But he could not keep his eyes from that brown, bending face in the feeble light.

Ducane lifted himself on his elbow,

"I don't want Robison's blood on my hands," he said. "And, after all, it was his business, wasn't it? Not mine. If he loved her enough—he said a girl shouldn't suffer that penalty."

"But you haven't told me who it was," said Tempest gently.

"Oh, haven't I?" said Ducane. "It was Grange's Andree."

Dick had expected that name. But he felt the chill run along his blood as he heard it. Tempest stared in utter amaze.

"Andree?" he said slowly. Then his voice thickened. "Who dared invent that devilish lie? Was it you? By ——, if you did——"

"No, no," screamed Ducane, frightened out of his pain. "I didn't. It's true. You'll see it all in the paper. Robison promised her at the time that he'd take the punishment if it was found out. But he wanted masses said for his soul. He wanted them said for a martyr, not a murderer. That's why he gave me the paper. And I don't want his blood——"

The impish devil in Dick was laughing at the mockery of this. Robison's sacrifice had been epic, but it had failed in such a poor, feeble way. Failed because of the man's vanity. He could not bear that some unknown priest should give his name to his gods as a murderer's name. And then he shuddered, seeing behind this something of the futility of human plans.

Tempest stood up.

"Where is that paper?" he asked.

Dick's ever-nimble mind was working instantly. While Tempest's voice held that tone he was not to be trusted with any paper of importance. For the moment Dick hardly considered the meaning of the paper. It was his natural instinct which led him to protect anything which could compromise anyone.

"It's in my black wallet—back pocket of my breeches."

Ducane did not know what he had done, for he had utterly forgotten Tempest's connection with Grange's Andree. But the feeling that he had given important information to these two men sustained him until he almost forgot his suffering. And he quite forgot that he was preparing for speedy death.

Before Tempest could move Dick had pounced on the wet garment where it hung over a box. He remembered those old riding-breeches in the days when he had first known Jennifer. They were torn and dirty now; but he fumbled with shaking fingers for the buttoned back pocket, drew out the silver-initialled clasped case that had once been so familiar to him,

and thrust it into the breast of his tunic. Then Tempest was standing over him.

"Where is the paper?" he said again; and before that voice the ready lie halted on Dick's lips.

He picked the breeches up and shook them.

"Not here," he said. "Ducane must have put the wallet in his shirt or his artiki or something. Or it may have dropped on the ground. We'd never find it to-night in all this litter. And it's too confoundedly dark to see anything, anyway. Wait till morning, Tempest. It can't get lost by then."

He was talking without knowing what he said. Nothing seemed very real to him at that moment but the knowledge that he did not want to hear Tempest speak again. That curious, crushed tone sounding through the blackness of the tent was so hideously unlike Tempest. From the mattress Ducane called fretfully. The opiate which Tempest had given was beginning to take effect, and the fear of instant death was no longer whipping him into frenzy.

"I'd be better now if I could get some rest," he said. "If you two would only shut up and let me sleep maybe I'll live after all."

"That's an inducement," said Dick, treading over the bundles and boxes to him. "Leave that wallet till the morning, Tempest. We'll look for it then." He thrust it further into his shirt. "I guess it's not very far off," he added.

Tempest did not speak again. He turned, groping for the flap, and went out. And after a moment Dick followed, dodging the moonlight that shone so baldly over the bareness without. For he did not intend that this man whom he and Fate were trying-out in such furnaces should put an end to his training at this juncture. Dick was feeling for Tempest now, very keenly and anxiously: but mixed with the pity was a strong resentment, an impatience; even a savage kind of gladness that Tempest should know at last the full worth of this girl whom he had been squandering the treasure of his life upon.

"He must be sickened of her after this," he said. "He must be sickened of her. Gad! what is that girl made of, anyhow? And how is he going to stand up to it, I wonder."

With crafty softness he followed among the low rocks as the tall, black shadows bobbed among them where Tempest went down to the lake shore. He shivered in the keen air and the pallid moonlight. If Tempest chose to try to drown himself there was an unpleasant time coming for both. But Tempest seemed to have no such thought. He turned along the beach, and for an hour Dick watched him come and go; walking

slow and steadily, with hands deep in his trouser-pockets and head up as though his eyes were looking away to the lonely stars that edged the far level rim of the earth. He was quite evidently thinking out some plan, and Dick began to breathe more freely. He could meet cunning with cunning; but he would not have known what to do with a man broken down by grief. He had borne his own share of heartaches, and knowledge of his endeavour to help Tempest was not the least of them. But at least he could face the world with bold eyes and a joke still, and if Tempest could not, he would feel that disgrace for Tempest as fully as any other.

Tempest had suffered in silence so far, and not even the most curious tongues and ears at Grey Wolf could know how he had taken his punishment. Dick did not know. But he felt desperately that he must know soon. He must smash down that barrier in Tempest before the hardening process had gone so deep that the man below was stultified. Whether he was competent to break it down did not occur to him. He meant to do it, and these things are not done by the men who doubt their own powers. Of Andree he was not thinking yet. He did not desire to think of her, nor of the use to which that paper might have to be put. But neither did he intend to give it up to Tempest. His determination there was quickened by that jealousy for Tempest's honour which possessed him more and more as he realised how far his own stood from it. Besides, with him as with many of us, the knowledge that there are some people walking their straight way in the world seems to accord to the rest the licence to do that evil which is a necessary part of the earth's make-up.

Dick wheeled at last and went back to the tent. He lit a match and stared at the sleeping Ducane until it burnt his fingers and went out. Then he flung himself down on his own pile of bedding and lay still. Until now he had accepted the fact that Ducane was alive and might outlive him. He had accepted it as mankind usually accepts the obvious things, and he had expended himself in trying to find a way round the edge of the obstruction. Now, with a shock of realisation, it had come to him this night that Ducane's life might not be worth much after all. He was a prematurely aged man; enfeebled by excesses; weakened by living in a way which few white men can stand for long, and with no stamina of brain or spirit to help him in a crisis. Lying there, the longing for this man's death swept over Dick like a torrent of fire; blotting out all but the remembrance that there was a hard journey yet before them, and that no law of men nor angels could make it necessary for him to smooth the trail before Ducane's feet. And if Ducane stumbled and fell and one day did not get up again, then, and only then, would Dick bring

his thanksgiving to whichever altar pleased him best, and say, "Allah is good."

In the cold, pale dawn he was up and away down the beach to a little jutting bluff behind which he could read that paper of Robison's in safety. The empty canoes beached on the naked shore; the two little white tents sitting together on the stony desolation struck him anew with the paltry weakness of them. Like a flake of foam off the lake they marked the shore for a moment and passed, leaving all as it had been and would continue to be. Those stones and that grey tossing lake and these barren cliffs were the only things unswayed by passion, unbroken by life. There was a stateliness, a dignity in the slowness and the surety of their changes. To Dick there was an irrelevant mockery, an almost disgusting levity about the rapidity of the changes in man. The difference seemed to put him, with his few puny years, on a level with those frail canoes and the tents that stamped no impress on the stones below them.

Then he backed up from the wind round the corner of the bluff, lit his pipe, and opened the wallet to find out in what words Robison and Ducane had endeavoured to ensure a future paradise for both.

There were a score of things in the wallet. Unpaid bills in plenty; a note from Jennifer—Dick knew her writing, and he thrust that sheet back hastily; some accounts; some memorandums; finally a dirty piece of paper folded very small.

"I fancy that looks like Robison's thumb-mark," said Dick, and he opened it, smothering an oath at seeing that it was written in smudged pencil.

Then, picking out the words in Ducane's crabbed hand-writing with difficulty, he read it.

The whole of the account was ill-constructed and full of repetition. It had evidently been drawn up on that night at Chipewyan when Ducane had decided to decamp and Robison had preferred to chance the possibility that Dick might have come on other business. First came Robison's promise to get Ducane smuggled away east towards Hudson Bay through the Quatre Fourches Indians, on condition that Ducane agreed to the following requirements. Robison's name was set in his big black hand to that. And then came the requirements; and before Dick had got through their tangled phraseology and their strange mixture of cant and bold courage and real faith, he was not feeling himself such a very much better man than this coarse, blunt-minded breed, who had gone to his death for love of a woman who did not love him, trusting to this paper to absolve him from purgatory.

Stripped of clogging words the details of the whole affair

were bald; much more bald than Dick had hoped for. They told how Robison had gone to bring Andree back from the English Mission: how they had met Ogilvie in the trail: how the two men had quarrelled and Ogilvie had pulled out his knife; how Andree had snatched the knife and stabbed Ogilvie, and how Robison had dragged him off into the coulée and flung him down among the thick undergrowth and snow. The paper also told how he had intended to bury the bones so soon as the snow was gone, and how he had subdued Andree's alarm at what she had done by promising to shoulder the possible results. It desired any priest who should receive this paper to pray for the soul of Kesikak Robison, who had died to save the life of another, and added that Ducane would pay all the necessary charges.

Both men had signed this, and at the foot was set in full the oath by which Ducane swore to deliver the paper and pay the money. This Ducane had signed alone.

Dick folded the paper and put it back in the pocket-book. He was thinking first that Ducane had either money concealed about his rags, or that he was in communication with some person "outside." In the latter case there might be the chance of bail perhaps, or of influence set to work to free him. Dick made a mental note of that. Then he considered the other matter. It was probable that if Andree had pleaded manslaughter at the beginning she might have got off lightly. For Ogilvie was known to have been drunk, and had assuredly been impertinent. But she had Robison's death also on her shoulders now. Dick understood at last her cry to him in Grange's back-parlour on the day of the trial.

"If he want to die, why do it matter?" she had said; and he knew Andree sufficiently to deduce her reasoning. She did not want to die, and if Robison did, why should she not let him? Dick grinned over the simplicity of it. Andree's wits would not carry her further than that, and most assuredly her conscience would not. For there was in Andree a quality which belongs to a certain class of masculine minds; the quality which enables a person to accept the thing which has occurred as inevitable, and therefore not to be regretted or remembered. But there are few women who can look at life from that standpoint.

"She could never begin to appreciate that sacrifice," he said. "Little devil."

And then, horribly, vividly, the truth came back to him that Andree loved him; that he had taught her to love him. And after that he looked up at a step on the gravelly beach, and saw Tempest.

"I guessed you were here," said Tempest. "I have come for that paper, Heriot."

Tempest had always called him Heriot since Andree came between them. But to-day the name struck Dick's ears with sharpened force. It reminded him that this breaking of a friendship which would leave raw edges through the length of two men's lives would trouble Andree no more than the death of Robison, or of Ogilvie, or of that wild O'Hara who had died with her name in his mouth.

"I haven't got the paper," he said. "Couldn't you——?"

Tempest shook his head slightly, like a stag when the midges are about him.

"It is true, then?" he asked. "It reads like truth? Tell me, Dick, for I have got to know it now."

"Why, yes." Dick tried to hide his nervousness by knocking out his pipe and thrusting it into his side-pocket. "Bound to be extenuating circumstances when the matter's gone into, though. Ducane's so much better this morning that I think we needn't delay at all. Did you come to call me for breakfast?"

"What do you intend to do with that paper?" asked Tempest.

"Keep it—for the present, anyway."

"You will give it to me," said Tempest quietly.

"Not on your life." Dick buttoned up his tunic with a short laugh. "Don't talk that way," he said. "You know you don't expect me to give it."

The rare fury blazed into Tempest's face. Those careless words had knocked the skin off the unhealed sore below, and though the spirit had won out to a certain staying-point during the night, the natural reaction had left his temper less under control.

"Then I will have it taken from you by force," he said, and Dick saw with approval the quick tightening-up of the slim body. "I am your superior officer."

"If you do you're not the superior man," said Dick coolly. "Come and get it if you want it, for I assure you you won't have it any other way."

He did not know what reckless demon in him prompted the challenge. But Tempest answered to it before the words were off his lips, and the two men closed; knee locked in knee, arms gripped, and flushed faces near as they swayed.

Dick and Tempest had wrestled many times in the days that were gone, and Tempest's lithe quickness had matched Dick's strength equally until Tempest learnt a throw for which Dick could not find the counter. He had found it since, in Chicago, and had seen a back broken by the application of it. Now he felt Tempest manœuvring for that throw, and a cruel laugh ran into his eyes. Tempest did not know what could come of it now—if Dick chose. He baulked it by a

sudden feint, and again they bent and swayed, spurting the gravel out from under their struggling feet, and feeling the lust of fight generate with each hot, hard-breathing moment.

It seemed as though all the pain and bad blood and evil tempers of the last months had culminated at last, and both men gloried in the knowledge, and fought to ease themselves of the load. Inch by inch Tempest was feeling for the throw again, and this time Dick did not stop him. The fighting savage had been too fully roused in him, and he was mad with desire to prove himself the better man. He slacked his body slightly, letting Tempest get home to the side-swing that preceded the fall. Then, at the one instant when the other man's balance was unguarded, Dick crouched, shifted his grip quick as lightning, and flung Tempest over his shoulder.

Tempest fell with a thud on the stones of the beach. Being utterly unprepared he had made no resistance, and Dick staggered up and looked at him, breathing heavily through his nostrils. Tempest lay on his face with one arm under him and his body curled up. He did not move, and for a space Dick stared at him without emotion. Then terror smote him in such a blinding, tearing agony that it felt like death itself. He dropped on his knees by Tempest, but he dared not touch him. From somewhere he heard a voice saying:

"Have I broken his back? Have I broken his back? Have I broken his back?"

At first he did not know that voice for his own. Then he traced it to his moving lips and at once began to take a close and curious interest in the individuality of this "I." It did not seem to be really himself, any more than that still thing with the hidden face seemed to be really Tempest. Then why was he afraid? Why was he so sick afraid that his hands were numb and the little pebbles under his knee-bones burnt like fire? Part of his brain was searching for a reason, and presently out of the back of his mind there shaped the memory of a sketch of his pasted on the wall of the bunk-room at Grey Wolf. It was just an eye, gazing indifferently over the edge of the universe into space, and he had drawn it to illustrate the callousness of that Power which, men alleged, controlled creation and all things within it. Now he knew that he had drawn a true thing, only the Eye was not indifferent. It was watching him. It had been watching all the time, taking that close and curious interest in his individuality which he took himself.

In a spasm of uncontrollable fear he hid his face from it, but he knew that it was watching still. It was that Thing which Hindoo, and Buddhist, and Christian and Mahomedan each give their own name to and worship. It was the Thing

which he had jested about and made a mock of. And now it was making a mock and a jest of him.

He put his fingers out to touch Tempest and pulled them away again.

"If I knew he was dead," he heard his voice saying. "I could stand it if I knew he was dead. But it's such a ghastly thing to break a man's back. He could live quite a while with a broken back."

The sound of his voice steadied him somewhat. It seemed the only human thing in this cold, barren place where he knelt alone under his sin with that Eye watching.

"I must get help," he said, and stood up. For a minute he stood as if in thought, but he was not thinking. "Certainly I must get help," he said again, and turned down the beach and went back to the camp.

Among the little stones Myers was building a driftwood fire and putting on the kettle to boil. Depache, moving his long limbs slowly, rolled the bedding and strapped it, whistling a little song the while. Within the nearer tent Ducane was cursing. Dick rubbed his eyes, standing still beside the fire. These men did not seem real either. They looked like cut-out paper pasted against the colourless background of cliffs, and it seemed such a silly thing to speak to paper men.

"Tempest," he said, and stopped, wondering if they could possibly hear him. And then he raised his voice. "The Inspector is hurt," he said. "Bring a couple of paddles and a blanket. We must carry him in."

He believed that the men swore in amaze and asked questions. He believed that they hurried him along the beach, dragging the paddles and the scarlet Hudson Bay blanket with them. But he did not talk to them. The voice inside his head continued to repeat, "Have I broken his back? Have I broken his back?" and another voice, the one which he knew for the inevitable cynic devil in his blood, returned, "Well, you tried to. What are you making a fuss about? You tried to."

Between them the three men carried Tempest back to the tent, and rubbed him, and put heated stones to his feet and cloths wrung out of hot water over his heart. It was Depache who commanded here, with his soft eyes gleaming, and Dick who obeyed, enraged at the futile imbecility of it all. Could any reasonable man suppose that hot stones and fomentations were of use when the Power represented by that watching Eye was alone able to control the issue?

"We should ask It," he began to say stupidly, once or twice. "We are no good, you know. We should ask It."

But his words were brushed aside, and he was bidden plunge his hands into the scalding water to wring those hot

cloths which could not bring the colour of life back to Tempest's skin. Depache was making little broken prayers as he worked, and Dick looked at him with angry eyes.

"Why didn't you do that before?" he said; and then Depache straightened, with his melancholy, womanish face lighted exultantly.

"But it is that he will live," he cried. "See the blood come back under the skin. He will live."

Dick looked on the reddened flesh where the cloths were lifted. He saw the dark eyelashes quiver just a little, and he stood up and went to the door, feeling physically sick.

"For he doesn't know yet that his back is probably broken," he told himself. "He doesn't know that."

Behind him he heard Depache speak as one speaks to a man who yet belongs to the ordinary life of men, and that uncontrollable fear seized him again, chasing him out along the beach with hasty, unsteady feet. He could not face the consequences of this. He could not face that which Tempest might be facing now.

The scent of wood smoke drifted to him along the barren beach; the smell of rain was sweet and heavy in the air; lake and hills and sky lay colourless and softly tender where seabirds drifted over, sending down thin cries.

Dick did not know if it were mid-day or evening or early morning still. A strange, detached feeling of separation from all the natural things possessed him. There did not seem any thing to do or anywhere to go. He was helpless; helpless to avert the consequences of his own passion; helpless in the hands of that omnipotent Life which flushes the veins of men for a little space, and then withdraws to fulfil itself in other forms.

Because Dick had never loved anyone as he loved Tempest he had never known grief before. He had never known the need of a God before. He had never known utter fear. He knew them all now, and he staggered under the weight of them. In a little while he would have to go back to Tempest. He would have to go, and the horror of that thought plucked all the defiant unbelief out of him for the time.

"God," he said with stammering lips. "Oh, God! Oh, God!"

And then he walked on, and walked back again, still keeping the edge of the bluff where he and Tempest had fought between him and the camp. And at last, not knowing why he returned any more than he knew why he had gone out, he passed the bluff towards the camp again.

The tents were struck, and on the beach men moved, loading up the canoes. Dick stared, rubbing both his eyes. Was Tempest dead, or was he on his feet again; or, knowing the

end in store for him, did he want to go nearer the haunts of men to die? There were three men only moving on the beach, and not any of those three were Tempest. Dick shut his eyes, standing still, and struggling fiercely for control over himself. He must go and see. He must go. Suddenly he laughed a little. That Power which he had made a jest of was having its money's worth out of him now. Then he set his teeth and walked straight through the dismantled camp and up to the canoe which held Tempest.

Tempest was lying quite flat in the bottom, and the lines on his face showed physical pain. But he looked up, smiling.

"You nearly arranged for me to go home feet first," he said. "Where did you learn that counter, you beggar?"

"Is your back broken?" demanded Dick.

"No." Tempest smiled again. "You've given me a pretty nasty rick, though. I won't be much use for some days. You'll have to make Ducane work now, Dick. I guess I won't be the only one to suffer over this."

Dick had heard the first word only. Against his will, against his knowledge, sobs were shaking his body and his eyes burnt with hot tears. He turned away sharply, and went up the beach, seeking mechanically for some of the freight to carry to the canoe. Here he stumbled against Ducane, and Ducane caught hold of his tunic, complaining fretfully.

"This is a nice thing," he said. "Does Tempest expect that I'm going to take his place, I'd like to know? I'm not fit. How can I——"

For the first time this morning nature offered some relief to Dick.

"Oh, go to hell," he said savagely. And then he laughed in sudden exultation. For he himself had just come out of it.

CHAPTER XVI.

"THE LAW IS POWERLESS THERE."

"THE Indians throughout this region come yearly to Fort Resolution for Treaty, and, having no permanent camps, would not be benefited by a Police Detachment in the vicinity. The tribes are Yellow Knives and Dog Ribs, and they bear a fairly good reputation and seem passably prosperous. The Esquimaux——"

Tempest turned in the big chair where he sat propped with all the pillows which the barracks at Fort Churchill could muster.

"Those dogs are making an awful row," he said.

"They always fight in the first snow. Besides, the moon excites them." Dick drove his pen into the ink again. "Well?" he said. "The Esquimaux are not a very potent factor. I guess they can worry along all right without us."

"So long as they dress by their ancient laws and customs they're better without the white-man element. Yes. Er—The Esquimaux on the Hudson Bay side of Height of Land——"

Dick went on writing, and for a while there was no sound in the room but Tempest's quiet voice and the scribble of the pen and the noise of the husky dogs outside the window. The blind was up, and the white square of the moonlit snow showed beyond the black shadows of the buildings. Occasionally a dog shot across it, followed by the flickering ghosts of the mob. Then the square lay naked again, and in the little room where the black stove-pipe ran, oozing warmth, the two men worked on steadily.

It was just the fitting of another little grey unnoticed chip of mosaic into the huge pavement of Empire which thrusts its length around the world: just a curt telling of the necessary things with all that made it a human record left out. In the Parliament Buildings at Ottawa one man would read it. In the printing-room and proof-room one or two more would run over it with skilled eyes and brain elsewhere before it went to swell the size of the yearly Blue Book of the Royal North-

West Mounted Police. Some day in argument a clerk or a minister might turn up the report and find that the Hudson Bay Customs could conveniently be collected from Churchill. If a police map were near he might run his finger north until, between fifty-eight and sixty degrees of latitude, he found the little red flag which proclaimed that Fort Churchill was a post of the police. It might even interest him to see that it was just two thousand nine hundred and twenty-five miles from Liverpool, England. But this was not likely; nor was it likely that he or any other man would read, word by word, the report-sheets which lay on the floor round Dick's feet.

In Dick's black decided hand some of the headings showed on those scattered papers. Game; Topography; Temperature; Inhabitants; each slip filled up with curt, direct sentences which said nothing of the dreams under a blue sky with a fair wind in the sails; of the struggles and the suffering; of the solitude when the sound of a little bird calling floods the heart with a longing for home. The actual mileage was added to the foot of the report, as witness to the labours of four white men in the unconsidered areas; but few would heed it, although it ran well into the thousands. For this patrol was to stand with so many others among the things which do not matter particularly, and both men knew it as they patiently built up the report, page by page; Tempest in his chair, reading from blotted note-books and diaries; Dick at the table, with his tunic-collar loosed and his forehead knit and the rough edge of his hand making a little scratching sound on the paper as he wrote.

It was Tempest who sat crippled in the chair, but it was Dick's face which showed the burden of those past days. Ducane had been worse than useless in the canoes, and the journey down the Beverley Lake and along Chesterfield Inlet had dragged on until Dick was maddened beyond thought or speech. A cold, driving rain which no coverings could keep out had put rheumatism into that ricked back of Tempest's, and the two days of sailing and paddling up Hudson Bay itself into Fullerton, when it was found that the steamer had not waited for them, did not ease the trouble. Rough weather between Fullerton and Fort Churchill, with the little open steamer battling through the big seas and an early winter spurting in icy blasts down from the North had broken even Tempest's courage, and he accepted the decision of the men at the Fort Churchill post, and prepared to surrender his reins of government to Dick.

Already Dick had taken up all those threads which it had been necessary for Tempest to drop. He had managed Ducane as no other man could have done; he had arranged the slow and exceedingly difficult matter of procuring dog-train outfits,

and in the morning he was to leave with Ducane and Myers for the South. Previous instructions had transferred Depache to the Fullerton post, and Tempest would not soon forget the trouble in the man's gentle eyes as the little steamer snorted off from the wharf. Depache had looked after him with wonderful tenderness and forethought, and when he was left behind Tempest suffered considerably under Myers' rough hands and Dick's abrupt strength. Now he dropped the last pencil-scrawled, weather-stained note-book with a sigh of relief.

"I guess it's all in," he said. "Bring it here and let me look over it. You've got Rainer's Fullerton reports all right, have you?"

"Yes. He's wanting a whole lot of lumber sent in next spring. Hope he'll get it." Dick gathered up the sheets and carried them over the room. "Do you want those ermine skins sent east right away?"

"Not if you can get them properly cured and made up in Winnipeg. If you wire Harley to meet you at the station he'll take charge of them. Tell him I want them fixed into the fashionable kind of furs women wear now. And tell him they're for my sister. He knows Betty."

So did Dick, and his memory jumped back to days in the old home far off in Ontario when he and Betty had climbed apple-trees together and pelted Tempest where he lay in the long grass with "The Canterbury Tales," or Schiller, or, in later days, Tolstoi or Schopenhauer. He looked down at Tempest's long hands moving with difficulty among the papers, and looked away again sharply.

"Hellier is making things good and snug here for the winter," he said. "They've hauled no end of wood, and the whole place has been freshly muddied-up. You will be happy as a coon in a hollow tree, Tempest."

"Yes. I wish I could have got through." Tempest's eyes darkened. "Hellier has written the Commissioner, telling him that I'm not fit."

"He'd know that, I imagine. He knows you. And it's going to be a beast of a time. Soft snow and rotten dogs. I've got scratch teams if ever I saw them. Thank the Lord Myers is a first-class driver, though."

"Yes," said Tempest absently.

He went on reading, and Dick thrust some more wood in the stove; lit his fourth pipe that evening; roamed through the room restlessly, straying at last to the blindless window. He smoked in long breaths, screwing his eyes up, as a painter does in seeking for his values. But he was not thinking of that bold beauty which the snowy night offered.

The strained, unnatural mood which had held him for days

after that fight with Tempest had gone, as a matter of course. But he could not wholly forget it. He could not forget that for the time he had absolutely believed in a God : that he had cried to that God for help : that he had felt the reality of that God more keenly than he had ever felt anything in his life. He knew that Tempest believed, and he guessed that here lay the secret of Tempest's unclouded eyes and calm forehead, and his patience under pain. But that did not clear the matter for his own mind. Logically, without bias, he had endeavoured to thresh it out, and he could see no reason for belief in an all-prevailing Godhead. The sorrow and the torment of the world was to his understanding clear proof against it, and the comparison between his own virile strength and Tempest's bowed body sharpened that proof until he turned from the struggle bitterly. But over and over again, unbidden, unwelcomed, it came back.

He leaned his knee on the window-sill, staring out with both hands in his pockets. And his face was drawn into a heavy frown. Suddenly he felt that Tempest was watching him, and he swung round, reddening angrily. Each day it became harder to meet the light in those unconquered eyes.

" You've had a hard day," said Tempest. " But everything is fixed now, isn't it ? "

" Why, yes. I could only get four dogs for each team, and they're a mangy lot. Mongrel curs, most of 'em ; one or two huskies, and a Mackenzie hound. He'll pull like a bullock if the huskies don't kill him. They'll try. It's not going to be a good trip. Snow isn't fit. But Myers and I are in splendid fettle, and Ducane has picked up a lot. We have a breed too, as far as Split Lake. Couldn't persuade him to come further. He's in for the trapping."

Tempest asked several questions more, and then came silence again. Across the passage the men of Fort Churchill detachment were laughing uproariously in the mess-room. Here, in Hellier's private room, these two men of the little northern patrol sat without speech. Dick was searching for words, but he could not find them. Twice in his life he had set out to save a brother's soul and each time he had cut his own fingers to the bone instead. Then Tempest said :

" You still have that paper of Robison's ? "

" Certainly."

" You will give it in to the Commissioner at Regina ? "

" Certainly."

Dick jerked out his pouch and proceeded to refill his pipe, sitting astride a chair. His manner could not have been more brutally indifferent, and yet he had never so deeply longed to tell Tempest how much he cared for him.

" Why wouldn't you give it to me when I asked you ? "

"I didn't intend that you should destroy it."

"Ah!" It was a quick note of surprise. "You thought I meant that?"

"What else should I think?" Dick twisted the chair, looking with resentful eyes. "I consider you acted like it."

"I had not thought of your suspecting that," said Tempest with sudden haughtiness. "You might naturally have imagined that I would have wanted to read it for myself, and when you refused I remembered some special reasons why you should not have been the man to deny me that right." His voice changed suddenly. He sighed. "I don't believe I thought much after that," he said. "If I had I hope I'd have behaved differently. What illogical, disreputably-minded beings we are—all of us. And yet how splendid we are—most of us."

"Ducane, for instance," said Dick bitterly.

"I was thinking of Robison. And you believed that I wanted to destroy that paper? The thing has gone far beyond that—unless I could at the same time destroy the deed and the conditions that made for it."

A twinge of mental or physical pain stopped him. Dick lit his pipe with hurried, impatient hands. His own part in this affair seemed to be showing less nobly. But how could he have known? And then, with sudden force, the explanation hit him. A man naturally judges others by himself.

"We recognise the responsibility of the criminal fast enough," said Tempest slowly. "I wonder if we are always so sure of his identity."

"She did it long before I had any——"

"Leave the personal element out," said Tempest. "We can't alter that by discussing it. I told you it had gone far beyond that. But—because the representation will lie in your hands now, I want to speak to you about this. We white men make and enforce the criminal laws of a country. But it is not taken sufficiently into consideration that in very many cases we also make the conditions, which, later on, call for the enforcements of those laws. So that the punishment, when it falls, often falls on the wrong person."

His voice was so quiet that Dick could not guess in how far his heart was stirred.

"That's an old story," he said. "It's the same all the world over. We can't help it. We are only sufficiently advanced to see the obvious yet. We do our best—with the limited sense we've got."

"I don't think we do. We don't take into consideration the fact that the civilisation of those who make the laws is in many cases about a thousand years older than the civilisation of those whom we force to obey them. When we spend less money on paying men to tinker with those laws, and more

on teaching men how to live so that they won't need those laws, then we may be really doing something towards the development of the individual. But we won't study economics sufficiently for that. We make laws. And at the same time we are making criminals."

"Punishment for crime is not man's idea. You're rating his intellect too highly. It's one of the natural primary laws."

"Of course. The moral punishment. I was speaking of the physical. The moral punishment falls on the race—on the nation. And we think to avoid it by visiting physical punishment on the few. That doesn't alter our obligations."

"Well, what are you going to do about it? I fancy other men have been struck with the same notion. But I don't observe that it's affected the world at all."

"But that doesn't alter our obligations. We white men have chosen to be rulers of the world. Do the best we can we'll have a mighty reckoning to pay for that pride. And we'll have a mighty reward for that service. But until we recognise our brotherhood, until we recognise our individual responsibility, we are not going to get much virtue out of our inheritance."

"I tell you we do what we can. I think the law is too ready to look for extenuating circumstances."

"Do you think it will find any extenuating circumstances in Andree's case?"

Dick shut his teeth with a snap on the pipe-stem. He did not look at the other man.

"How can I tell?" he said sullenly.

"Do you?"

"No."

"Nor do I. And yet we both know that they are there, and we know that the law can't recognise them. The responsibility lies with those who make it possible for a girl to grow up with no restraint, no moral training, no traditions. And it lies with those white men—those rulers of the country—who take advantage of that. We know that, too, and the law knows it. But the law is powerless there—and so are we."

"I thought you knew human nature better than to talk like that. We can't get back to the original factor in an individual case, anyway. He's generally dead."

"No, he isn't," said Tempest quietly. "He's always living—plenty of him. He's you and me, and all the other men who help to rule and serve Canada. He is every man who hasn't got five cents to spare for the Missionary box; and who can't be bothered to subscribe to the Hospital Fund, and who makes a ring on the Education Board because of the money he can get out of it. He is every man who won't put sin or temptation out of another's path because he's afraid of dirtying his

own hands. He is every man who takes advantage of the laws of the country to add to that sin and temptation. Oh, he isn't dead. Don't you think it. He's alive, and he's going to keep on living. And he is going to keep on governing the world."

Dick was on his feet now. He walked through the room. Then he came back and stood over Tempest. His face was black.

"Because you're a Puritan you needn't curse all other men," he said. "I imagine we are as God made us—if there is a God."

Tempest flushed painfully.

"I don't want to curse other men. But—I can be glad that she is to die for this. It was life that I was afraid of for her."

Dick walked back to the window. He stood there some time. Then he said:

"On my honour, I never meant to make her love me."

"What happened to your honour when you gave me your word that you'd leave her alone, and then broke it?" said Tempest sternly.

Dick turned round. That crumpled body with the clear, menacing eyes seemed suddenly terrible. He understood that this man was fighting for more than "the individual case."

"Oh, you can't understand," he said impatiently. "If you could you wouldn't need to ask. You'd know for yourself. A man struggles—or he doesn't struggle. And it all comes to the same in the end if he's built that way."

"That can't be true." Tempest lay back, staring at the wall. "Good and Evil are forces," he said. "Whether we generate them ourselves and let them loose in the universe, or whether they are in the universe and we have power to annex them doesn't matter much, I think. We have access to them, anyway. And we can choose which we will have access to principally, and we know that the more we have to do with the one the less we can have to do with the other. That seems to have proved itself. Those forces are indestructible. Huge blind gods, perhaps. Purposeful things with individual power to attract or repel, perhaps. We don't know anything about all that. But we do know that we can draw those forces into ourselves and transmute them by the alchemy of our own souls into potent things. And we do know that, whether we like it or not, we have got to transmit those potent things to others. It may be possible for mankind to so absorb the Good that it will in time kill all sin out of being, as inoculation destroys disease. That is another thing we can only guess at. It is certainly possible for us individually to absorb the evil so far that we seem unable to retain the good. But the

Good must be meant to win out if we would only help it. There is no other solution for the making of Life. And how do we know that the Good is not seeking us as we are seeking it? A new Force, like electricity or magnetism, ready to enlighten the whole universe if we would only give it a chance. We grope in the dark. How do we know that we haven't got the match in our hand, waiting to be lit?"

His face was glowing and his eyes deep with a glory that Dick had not seen even in Tempest before. Dick looked at him in envy.

"I reckon you have lit your match," he said.

"No, no. Oh, God knows I haven't." Tempest put up his shaking hands to his face. "There were times when I could have killed you," he said.

Dick drew a long breath.

"Thank the Lord for that," he said. "You've sometimes scared me into thinking you couldn't be human. I was afraid you only wanted to kill yourself."

"I did want to." Still Tempest spoke with his face hidden. "I knew that I had to see this thing in a larger way or I probably would." He broke off, sitting silent; and Dick walked through the room with his lips tight-shut. At last he touched Tempest on the shoulder.

"Here's your medicine," he said. "Let me hold the glass. What do you expect me to think of a God or a Good that can let you suffer this way while I go free?"

Tempest looked up. His forehead was wet near the hair, and his eyes were very sad.

"Do you go free?" he asked.

Dick looked away. The blind battling soul in him desired intensely to cry out its doubts and troubles to this man. But his stubborn heart held him back. Besides, he told himself that he could not speak of Jennifer.

"I'd give my own strength to get yours back," he said.

"It will come back." Tempest smiled a little. "I'm not going to be laid on the shelf yet. And I owe you more than you owe me."

"What?" Dick looked at him in sudden distrust.

"You did turn me back into the trail again. And I believe that you began to do it honestly. And I have no right to judge you. I have failed too far myself. I had thought that I could stand—and it needed her sorrow as well as mine to show me the only way in which I could stand. She had to pay so that I should learn, you see. I have got to do something with that learning."

"Tempest! Do you love her still as a man loves the woman he wants for his wife?"

Dick blurted the question out, half-afraid, half-desperate.

With that paper in his pocket he knew that he must know this.

"No," said Tempest, very low. "Not that way any more."

He did not explain further. But Dick guessed, and he did not guess so very far wrong. Tempest loved Andree now for all that she was not. For all that an unripe and over-strenuous civilisation had made her. For all her kin who would sin and suffer under that same civilisation. For all that ignorance required at the hands of knowledge—and did not get.

There was silence again in the room. And then Hellier, Sergeant in charge of the post, came in, and after that the wheels of life took up their ordinary running once more. There was much to be said yet. Much that never would be said. Tempest had forgiven Dick. But he had shown very fully how much there was to forgive. And Dick, although feeling painfully that he should be grateful, set out on the winter trail with no light heart.

On the third night out they camped on the edge of the heavy timber, and the morning gave a cold world of wind and storm and a drifted trail that demanded constant breaking. Each man but Ducane took his turn at that and his turn at holding the blinded, struggling dogs into it when it was broken; and each man but Ducane laboured to put the tent up in the teeth of the wind that night, and to make a fire with the little green twigs torn off the bowed spruces. But it was Ducane who refused to turn out of his blankets on the following morning. He complained of that cramp which had caught him by Beverley Lake, and Dick, who had expected this, found a sinful delight in administering some medicine which kept Ducane passably civil for two full days.

The three men of the Outer Places were wolf-thewed and tireless. They could break trail for a half-day and feel no after pains. They would curl up in their wet furs and sleep, and wake cheerfully to another day of labour. But Ducane had never belonged to the Outer Places, and in a very little while he began to drive Dick desperate with his complaints. Dick cured his toothache by threatening to abstract the tooth, and he heard no more of Ducane's weak ankle after the night on which he urged the teams forward, leaving Ducane to limp sulkily into camp when supper was done. But through the cold and heavy fortnight of travel which landed them at Split Lake Ducane made life for those about him an infinitely more wearisome thing than it had any need to be.

It was on the trail to Norway House where the police flag flew at the head of Lake Winnipeg that Ducane asked the question which Dick had been expecting since they first met.

"Where is Jenny?" he asked; and Dick stopped his walk and looked at him.

"With her mother in Toronto. You expect her to come and bail you out, of course?"

"What business is that of yours?" snarled Ducane. Then he looked at the other man in sharp suspicion. "What business is it of yours what my wife does or doesn't do?" he said again. He thrust his watery eyes and ragged beard close to Dick. "Do you love her?" he snapped suddenly.

"What business is that of yours?" countered Dick lazily.

"Why—I guess it is my business, too. I——"

"No, it is not." Dick turned on his heel. "The next time you poke your nose into my private affairs you'll likely get hurt, Mr. Ducane," he said, and left the other man puzzled and staring.

CHAPTER XVII.

"BUT THAT CAN'T BE."

"COME in," said the Commissioner.

Dick halted yet another moment before he followed his knock into the office. These three days in the Regina Headquarters of the Royal North-West Mounted Police had brought him back to the trim alertness required of every man who wears the buffalo-badge, and his mind was fully as alert as his body. But it was much less brushed and buttoned into shape, and his eyes were anxious as he crossed over the threshold, saluted, and stood up, rigid and expressionless, before the Commissioner.

The Commissioner was sitting sideways at his table with his keen face more grave than was usual. Many things and many men passed under his hands, and his work was often weighty on him. But he loved it, and he took a pride in his men, although he seldom told them so. He had known Dick in the days when Dick was rough-rider here, and he had seen him many times since when he sent the man out on his lone patrols and welcomed him when he came back to report. He turned to him now with the steady eyes that had learnt how to judge men while the man himself was learning how to trust them, neither forgetting nor ignoring conditions of upbringing or birth.

"You are looking better than when you came in," he said. "Are you feeling as fit as you look?"

"Quite, thank you, sir."

"Ready for another lone patrol?"

A change flickered over the composed face before him. It was gone instantly; even before Dick said his respectful, "Yes, sir." But the Commissioner had seen it, and again he wished, as he had so often wished before, that it was not incumbent on him to treat these fiery pieces of flesh and blood and spirit so like machines.

"You have had seven months of severe work," he said. "I should not send you out again just now if I did not believe that you were the most suitable man I can spare at present."

"I am ready to go, sir," said Dick.

He had regained his outward balance, but his mind was whirling. Ducane—he was one of the principal witnesses in Ducane's case. He had got the information together. He knew more of the connecting links than anyone else. If he were sent away again, for months, perhaps for a year, what was going to happen to that case? The Commissioner was watching him.

"What is it, Heriot?" he asked.

"I was thinking about that case of Ducane's, sir. I worked it up—so far as it went."

"Ah! Ducane. Yes, of course. He's in cells here, is he not? Yes. I have all the information on that case tabulated here. Sergeant Jones sent it down from Grey Wolf, and of course it has been in abeyance until we got the man. Did this Ducane tell you that he desired to turn King's Evidence?"

"He said so. But I didn't believe——" Dick stopped in disgust.

"Well, it is a fact. I saw him the morning after you brought him in, and he gave me the names of this company. I am operating now on the basis of what I got from him, and I fancy we can manage without you, Heriot. You are wanted for more important work." The Commissioner smiled. "This man will be no trouble," he said. "He is eager to tell everything in order to lighten his sentence. He will lighten it, of course. In fact, after the case comes up in court he will probably be let out on bail pending the arrest of the other men. There is a bigger thing behind this than the petty rogueries of Ducane, and I can assure you that your thorough work in the matter will not go unappreciated."

The Commissioner smiled again, but Dick's face was a blank. A cold horror had shut down over him. Ducane out on bail; penniless; practically a moral and physical wreck, and Jennifer with no one to guard her, no one to help her against him. He had not forgotten Jennifer's steady words that night in the Edmonton hotel.

"If he needs my help I shall always give it;" and he knew that she meant what she said. Through this long journey he had taken comfort in the thought that at least he was insuring her safety from Ducane. Now, seeing what he had done, and seeing himself helpless, he had no words to say.

"On the day you came in I wired Grey Wolf Barracks for the arrest of the girl called Grange's Andree," said the Commissioner, turning over the papers on his desk. "Sergeant Jones' reply came in an hour ago."

He paused, and Dick answered with his mechanical, "Yes, sir." He had neither thought nor care to spare for Andree at this moment.

"Sergeant Jones says that full inquiries have been made concerning the girl," went on the Commissioner, picking up a telegraph-form. "She is not in Grey Wolf. It has been ascertained that she went North, probably on the Peace, with two nuns who were going in to Fort Vermilion just before the rivers shut down."

"Went North! Andree!" Dick was startled into sudden attention. "She must have had word of this," he said.

"Ah!" The Commissioner leaned forward. "Why should you think that?"

"Why—she has always had a superstition against the North. She used to say that she would never come back if she once went down there——"

"You know her, then?"

"Yes, sir."

"Ah! How do you suggest that she might have been warned?"

"I don't know. Yes, I do. Ducane likely talked about the matter to someone and word got round to her. There has been plenty of time. It is over a year since he had the paper."

"I see. Then you think that she has gone North in order to escape?"

"Very probably," said Dick.

"I see." The Commissioner sat back in his chair, frowning at the wall.

"This complicates the affair," he said. "She has had six weeks or two months start. But it makes me all the more certain of the wisdom of my original decision. I have detailed you to bring the girl in, Heriot. It is a cold time of year for travel, but you are acclimated to that."

"You want me—to go after Andree?"

Dick spoke low and dazedly. The thought seemed strangely horrible and unreal.

"And as soon as possible." The Commissioner's voice sharpened. "We hanged Robison," he said. "We have hanged an innocent man. That is a stain which, to my knowledge, has not been on our name before, and I would give a very great deal if it could be wiped out. Unfortunately that is impossible; but it is all the more our duty to bring the real criminal to justice without loss of time. You have a genius for marking down your men, and I don't think I could do better than send you after her."

Dick did not speak. The Commissioner turned back to the table.

"You can get a dog-train outfit in Grey Wolf, of course," he said. "Don't delay at any point on account of funds. The honour of the whole Force is more or less tarnished until

we get her. For if she knows of it we may be sure that she is not the only one. You will leave here in the morning. Come to me after stables, and I will give you your letter of instructions."

Dick was dismissed, but still he did not move. The Commissioner looked at him again, and then for a moment he trod over the barrier of discipline.

"This patrol doesn't please you," he said. "I am sorry, for I have always looked on you as one of our keenest men. What is your objection?"

"I knew her—rather well," said Dick slowly. "I had sooner it had been another man to take her, sir."

The Commissioner looked away again. There was evidently much more here than he knew. But he had no right to probe too far into the inner lives of these men whom he ruled.

"I am sorry," he said. "But it is not necessary for me to tell you that in such work as we have to do private feelings must be ignored. The fact is, I trust you to make good time over this, Heriot. There is a good deal at stake. And in sending you I believe that I am sending the best man I have. You hold a good reputation for that kind of work, you know. That is all. Come and see me in the morning. You will be driven into Regina to catch the mid-day train West."

Dick went out. He turned along the familiar side-walk and across the barrack-square. But he did not know where he went, nor why. Like a burning-glass his mind was focussed suddenly on one point. He would not go after Andree. He would not, and he could not. He would go East; East to Jennifer. He would desert and go to Jennifer, and he would make her give him the comfort he would need when the shame of what he had done became known. He would take Jennifer, because Ducane must not take her, and he would take with her the searing disgrace and the need for the avoidance of his kind which must follow his desertion. He loved his work. It was the only thing which held honour alive in him. But he loved Jennifer.

"And, by——, I'll keep him away from her," he said, half-aloud.

"What's that?" A Colour-Sergeant thrust his arm through Dick's and walked on with him. "Glad to see you again, Heriot. A kid we had here—Warriner—was always talking about you and the other Grey Wolf folk. By the bye, queer thing that Mrs. Ducane should go back there, isn't it?"

"She's in Toronto——"

"Not she. Grey Wolf, my boy. Grey Wolf. Been there the last six months. She——"

Dick ceased to hear. He was suddenly very angry with Jennifer. What had induced her to go up there again? She

must have known that it would be much more difficult for him to take her away from there; much more difficult for him to escape from there. How the devil was he to——

He stopped impatiently, knocking the snow off his high fur over-boots. He had forgotten that Jennifer knew nothing of this determination of his.

"Is she alone?" he asked abruptly.

"Who? Oh, Mrs. Ducane? No; she has her mother with her, I believe. I fancy that if Ducane——"

The stream of talk went on, leaving Dick still more angry. Her mother! What in the name of sense had possessed Jennifer to saddle herself with her mother? What was he going to do with her mother? And how was he going to persuade her, even though he persuaded Jennifer? Even though? Sudden dread of the doubt which those words implied chilled him. He forgot the difficulties; he forgot the sacrifice; he forgot his anger. He remembered only that he wanted her—wanted her; that she was the one sweet and sacred thing to him—the one salve to all the aches and bruises that life had given him.

He went back to his corner of the bunk-room which he shared with four other men, and sat on his bunk with his head in his hands.

"I've got to think this out—I've got to think this out," he said, over and over. But his will would not hold any one point true. Again and again it swung him up into the wind, and he shivered, helpless as a ship in irons.

Tempest and Andree: Jennifer and Ducane: his own good name and the way men spoke of it from Herschel across to Fullerton and south into Regina itself. It was not his private name that he cared about. That had been blurred long years ago. But he was jealous for his work. His work. The one thing which he had never betrayed or belittled or neglected. The one thing which he had served purely, according to his lights. He had dreaded always that life and passion might call on him to cash in his brain also at the bank of his heart, and he knew that if ever that day came it would leave him naked of something which he never would have any more. His work was the one firm thing which he had clung to, and he knew, with a terrible clearness of vision, that even with Jennifer's arms about him, his soul would be sick for that work still, and for the pride which he had lost.

He stood up at last; changed his boots, thrust his cheque-book into his inner pocket, and went down to ask the O.C. for leave. He banked in Regina, and it was wise for a deserter to draw all his money out betimes, for, as he knew well, a cheque is often one of those little threads by which a man ties himself to that which he would escape.

And the next morning, across the snow-bound prairies, he sat in the train that rocked west, ever west, and fitted into shape with grim precision every move in this game which he meant to play.

It must be played quickly. He could not go to Grey Wolf and not go to the barracks. That would raise suspicion too soon. And he could not go to the barracks without reporting to Sergeant Jones, who knew already that he had been detailed for the patrol and who would already be getting the outfit together. Therefore, at whatever hour of the day or the night he took Jennifer away with him, it would not be long before he was looked for. He could hoodwink them in several ways, and he thought those ways out, hour by hour, sitting in the position which Tempest knew so well, with one knee over the other, and his chin shut into his hand. But for all the start he might get it would be little enough in that country where the few winter trails are known as a man knows the number of his fingers. Again he felt irritation at Jennifer because she had gone back to Grey Wolf.

"She might have known I would come to her," he said. "She might have known."

He felt strangely fretful and angry about something. He was going to give what to him would be the greatest sacrifice of his life, even though he gained what he most desired by it. But he could feel no exaltation; no calm determination. A child playing up and down the corridor offered him some candy.

"Those are kisses," she said, with her red lips upturned. But he pushed her aside with his knee.

"I don't want any," he said sharply, and she ran back to her mother, half-frightened.

Then his mind began to run on the fear of what Jennifer would say. She would not refuse again. He had got to break down her resistance this time. He had got to do it. He felt maddened at the very thought of going North and leaving her where Ducane could trouble her.

"She has got to give in," he told himself. "She has got to give in."

And then he sat still, and thought of all the things which he would say to her.

He had a month in which to mature those plans and arguments. A month of sleigh-driving behind the ringing horse-bells; of impatient waiting at side-way houses for a team; of cold beds and discomfort and the magic of the North pulling at his heart-strings and the shame of his purpose heavy on his soul. He faced that knowledge, looking out into the white world with sullen eyes and bitten lips. Again Life was making a jest of him. But this time he could not fling the jest back.

The barb had gone too deep. His pride was touched, and he could not contemplate the loss of that even in his secret heart and hold his head up.

He looked worn and thin and sulky when he knocked the snow of Grey Wolf off his over-boots on the familiar step and went into the barracks to report to Sergeant Jones. And the sight of the florid, fleshy little man in the chair which had once been Tempest's did not ease his spirit. Sergeant Jones had many things to say, and the short winter twilight had already shut down when Dick escaped and went through the kitchen to find Poley. His impatience to see Jennifer was over-riding most things now ; but the human part of him had to obey the calls of cold and hunger. And something of the keen edge of his temper softened at the old man's welcome, and at the hot food, and the warmth, and at Kennedy bursting in, rosy-faced and incoherent with delight.

The boy looked older, with little lines showing already about the corners of his eyes. His manner was more assured, and Dick looked on that piece of his work with pleasure. He was going out of it all, and Kennedy was exactly the kind of fellow to curse him with tears in his eyes and the bitterest profanity he knew. But he would not be able to forget that Dick had made him. The mess-room was dearly familiar, with the smells of old from the kitchen and the mat before the stove where Dick's pipe had burnt a hole. And Poley was dearly familiar, with his red rough beard where the grey hairs showed and his watery blue eyes either side the bloated nose. The man who had taken Dick's place was away, and Dick was thankful. For one little hour he lived here again in his own right. Then he stood up.

" I think I'll go around and see if Grey Wolf has got all its corners yet," he said. " Don't wait up for me, Kennedy. I can find my way into my bunk, I fancy."

Kennedy had talked of everything he knew ; including the disappearance of Grange's Andree, and the rumour (it was no more than a rumour) which had slid through Grey Wolf whispering that she was wanted.

" Don't speak of Andree to Grange," he said. " He's awfully cut up about it. You wouldn't think the little fellow'd a-had so much heart. He's blocked Moosta showing these pictures of yours around to folks since she left."

Dick had forgotten those pictures. He remembered them now with a swift pang. Then he nodded acquiescence, and went out.

But he did not turn down the well-known flapping sidewalk to Grange's. He went across to the frozen lake where the snow lay levelly hard and white under the new-come dark. Far over the glimmering stretch shone the lights of Jennifer's

home, and Dick turned his face towards them and walked forward quickly.

In the early days of her married life Jennifer had left the house-blinds up at night that the lights of his home might greet Ducane the moment he turned his eyes towards them from far off. Later she had drawn them that she might not see the gleam from the police barracks shoot out into the gloom. Now that neither Ducane nor barracks mattered any more she left them up, because she loved to see the white stars and the dance of the northern lights when the lamps were low, and to watch for the occasional beat of a night-bird's wings on the pane.

This night there were no northern lights, and the stars were shrouded. But the blinds were up still, though the lamps were high, and Jennifer sat in the softened glow of them, sewing on some white work. A half-made pinafore intended for one of Miss Chubb's children at the English Mission School lay on the floor beside her, and a black kitten had rolled itself up in it. Jennifer stooped to roll it out again, and heard across the room a sound like the flutter of a bird's wings on the glass. She looked round. And then she sprang to her feet; dropping her work, and shutting her hands over her leaping heart.

In the sudden terror of her face and her wide-stretched eyes Dick knew what he had done. Of course she did not know that he was within a thousand miles; two thousand; five. She would think that his spirit had come to tell her of his death. She would think——

"Good Lord," he said. "I've frightened the life out of her," and he ran hastily to the door into the side-hall.

Then he remembered that his disappearance would put more truth to her fear, and he cursed himself for a clumsy fool as he wrenched the door open; shed his heavy furs and cap in one movement, and thrust open the sitting-room door. Jennifer heard his feet, and she turned. She saw him at the door, but she could not believe. His face was so thin and his dark eyes looked so far back under those heavy brows.

"Jennifer!" he said; and with a queer, choked cry, she put out her hands to him, tottering where she stood.

Then she felt herself swept up in his arms, and his kisses on her; warm, strong, quick kisses over her lips and her eyes and her hair. She clung to him blindly, passionately; sobbing in little gasps, and incapable of any but the one thought that he had come back to her. He had come back, and all the terrible blanks of her life were filled by the touch of his lips and his arms.

He held her close; speaking with tender, broken words such as no one had ever heard on his tongue before. To the

end of her life she remembered the smell of the wood-smoke in his clothes; the roughness of his coat-collar where her tears wetted it; the shaking gentleness of his voice. He carried her over to the lounge by the open fire, and put her on it; sitting beside her with his arms round her yet, and his hand stroking her hair.

"I told you it had to come to this," he said unsteadily. "Darling—my darling—don't shiver so. It's all right, dear. It's all right now."

"I thought you were dead," she sobbed. "When I saw —I thought you were dead."

"I know. I know. Stupid brute that I was to frighten you so. You know better now, sweetheart, don't you? Are these the kisses of a dead man?"

He was controlling himself with difficulty. Ducane was forgotten; his own black, fierce fight with himself was forgotten. Nothing mattered but the sweetness of her lips on his own and that vague fragrance that clung about her hair and dress. It intoxicated him. He held her off; looking at her out of shining eyes, and laughing with pure pagan joy.

"Are *you* alive?" he said. "You little wild-haired thing! You want a garland of acorns and oak-leaves on that head of yours, and all the green grass under a fairy forest to dance on."

The glowing exultance of him seemed to fill the room up. Her veins tingled with his vitality. He put an electric spark into the air which lighted her own heart to a flame.

"I wanted you," she cried. "Dick, I wanted you! I wanted you!"

"I know you did. And I wanted you. And I've come to you. Good Lord, we thought we could do without each other, did we? What fools we were, my little girl. What fools! Ah! We're wiser now. Kiss me, sweetheart. Jennifer, if the skies fall, we'll have the hour. We'll have the hour, by God, whatever comes."

His vehemence began to frighten her. She shrank a little in the strong grasp of his arms.

"I can't think," she said breathlessly. "When you look and talk like that I can't think."

"Who wants you to think? Leave that for another day. Laugh, Jennifer. Don't look at me with your dear mouth quivering so. Laugh, sweetheart, for we have found each other at last."

For the moment she believed it. He was so glad, so gloriously sure. She smiled faintly, uncertainly, looking up at him with wet, hungry eyes. She noted the dark bruise which Ducane had made on his cheek-bone, and the rumpled hair, and the deep wind-burn tan of his skin. She put her fingers up softly to the bruise.

"Does that hurt?" she whispered.

He laughed again, remembering whose hand had given it.

"Not now, my darling. No. Nothing can hurt me now, I think. I'm going to wear you for an amulet in future, little girl. Do you hear that? You're coming away with me, Jennifer. Where shall we go, honey? We've all the world before us. Australia, with a sheep-run of our own? Or South Africa, with little nigger-boys to dig us diamonds? Or I know a place down at the bottom of Malay——" He was laughing still; stooping his ruddy, wind-whipped face to hers. "Anywhere, sweetheart. Anywhere at all. We've got the whole world to choose from, and there's always room for another rover on the Out Trail."

By the force of him he was sweeping her out into the atmosphere where his wild soul lived and drew deep breaths. But the air there was too strong for Jennifer. She felt suffocated; giddy; afraid. She pressed his face back with both hands, and he kissed the palms where they lay across his lips.

"Oh, don't," she gasped. "You frighten me."

"Poor little white bird. My darling, you're shaking all over. It was that cursed foolishness of mine at the window. See, then, is this going to bring the colour back?"

He kissed her eyelids and her forehead and her white cheeks, tenderly, remorsefully; and, like a weary baby, she let him do it. The storm of his passion seemed to have torn her strength up by the roots. She had nothing left to fight him with. She was scarcely conscious that there was need for fight. But dimly she felt that something wonderful and precious had come to her and that it could not stay. It could not stay.

"If one could only die," she whispered. "When one was perfectly happy, if one could only die."

His face changed and darkened. He, too, had forgotten the realities until her words brought them round him with thronging feet.

"Better to live and keep on being perfectly happy, you little silly thing," he said.

"But that can't be," she said, like one repeating a lesson. "That can't be."

Then he felt her move as though to push him away, and he held her more closely, foreseeing the battle that was coming. His strongly-masculine mind saw no use in it. There could be but the one end now. But he knew that the woman would have to go round about to it, and he waited, with his mouth a little set and a queer smile in his eyes.

"Let me go," she said. "Let me go. Oh, what have you made me do?"

"Something that neither of us will ever forget," he said

unsteadily. "I think I will remember the touch of your dear lips on mine when I am in my grave."

"Oh, how could I forget!" She spoke in a rush of terror, with the blood burning her face. "I only thought—of you——"

"You have only to think of me now till the end of time, Jennifer."

"No! No! You know that is not true. Oh, let me go! Let me go!"

She burst into an agony of weeping; flinging him off, and hiding her head among the cushions of the couch. He saw her slim body shake and jerk with the violence of her grief, and he stooped over her in a distress almost as great as her own. Something of the sort he had expected, although he could not understand it. But this shook him to the very core.

"Darling," he said. "Darling—for God's sake, don't, Jennifer, Jennifer; don't cry like that. Good Heavens, what can I do! What can I do! She'll kill herself. Dearest, dearest. Stop. Oh, Lord, what a clumsy brute I am."

He went down on his knees beside her; pleading in broken words; trying to see her face; shaking and moved beyond belief at her trouble, and yet knowing grimly that he must hold to such rights as he had gained, both for her sake and for his own. He could never leave her now. She needed him too much.

"For the love of Heaven, stop, Jennifer," he said. "I—I can't stand it. There is nothing on earth should make you cry like that. Dear; I'm not asking much of you. People get divorces every day, and you have a perfect right to demand one of Ducane."

He laid his hand on her shoulder; but she shook it off, and sprang up, with the tears dried in her eyes.

"Don't touch me," she said, with burning cheeks. "Don't touch me."

He had seen flashes of Jennifer's occasional temper before, and he breathed more freely; standing up against the mantel-shelf as she walked through the room with her hands shut up, fighting for her self-control. He did not attempt to speak, knowing that she would scatter his words out like chaff. He stood still, looking at the black kitten where it wound itself in a spool of Jennifer's thread, and presently she burst out:

"You should have helped me to do what was right. You are the strongest: you should have helped me."

"I did," he said, not looking at her. "It was right for you to come to me. We love each other."

"It is not right while Harry is alive. And I feel that he is I——"

"He is alive," said Dick coldly. "I have left him in prison at Regina Barracks. I found him living among the Esquimaux with a native wife."

He raised his eyes, and looked at her as he spoke. But she swung round and walked the room again, and he could not tell how much she was stirred by his news. She walked in silence, and presently he was ashamed of his brutality.

"For God's sake have some pity on me, Jennifer," he said. "Don't treat me as if I'd been a scoundrel."

"Then you must help me do what is right," she said.

"What do you choose to call right?"

"Sending you—away."

The voice very nearly broke. Dick laughed, half-impatient, half-desperate.

"Merci much, as the breeds say. No, I'm not going to help you do that. You hardly expect it, do you?"

"If you love me, I do."

"But this is madness," he said in exasperation. "There's no use going over all this ground again, Jennifer. You knew what I thought before. Now, after what you have allowed me to do, I consider that I have some say in the matter. I am not going to be sent away."

She stopped and looked at him with her eyes wide in her white face.

"You are making my punishment a very certain and bitter thing," she said.

"My darling—oh, good Heavens, what am I to do with you? Sweetheart, when a thing is done, it's done. You showed me just now that I meant more to you than anyone else. You can't take that back. It is not right that you should. Doesn't the God you believe in allow His creatures happiness, Jennifer? And if He does why should you deny it to us both?"

"Because this would not be the way to get it," she said.

He went to her and took her hand and led her back to the couch.

"Come here and sit down," he said. "You are not fit to stand. If we have got to go over this again I suppose we have got to. But we have not gone into it lightly, you and I. To disobey man's law means very little to me. Perhaps I know too many of the reasons why he makes many of them. And I do not——"

He stopped suddenly. He could not say that he did not believe in a God now.

"You—you believe in a God," he muttered, hardly knowing what he said.

"In my God and in my conscience," said Jennifer. "Dick, I have got to help Harry still if he needs help. He is my

husband. I can't let him utterly go to ruin. Oh, there is something in me which tells me that I can't."

She pressed her hands over her heart again, looking at him with her wide, wistful eyes. He could not meet that look. But in some way it angered him. What was that thing in Tempest and in Jennifer which commanded them apart from their hearts and their human wills? It was a power that they dare not disobey; that they would not disobey though all that was flesh in them cried out against it. He felt afraid; groping in the dark below them. That great Eye seemed moving down from the horizon of the world again. Jennifer could stand up before it. Tempest could. But he could not. He wanted his own will, and he hated that which denied it to him.

"And don't you think I want help?" he said bitterly.

"Yes. But I can only give it to you by being away from you."

"If you'd be good enough not to talk sophistries or enigmas—I beg your pardon. I don't know what I am saying."

He sprang up and walked through the room several times. Then he came back, beginning boldly:

"I tell you I need you more than Ducane does. As philanthropy seems to mean more to you than love you might make a note of that. You've filled my life up—every hour of it——"

His voice grew uneven; stopped, and he stood still, looking into the fire. For a little while she did not speak. Then she said:

"What had you wanted me to do?"

"To come away with me to-morrow." His voice changed eagerly. "I could arrange that quite easily. And then you'd go to the States, and I'd meet you somewhere."

"And your work?"

He felt the twinge. But it was a light one. Beside her nothing else was of moment.

"That doesn't matter," he said.

"How do you mean?"

"Well, it doesn't matter. You come first."

"Then you—meant to desert?"

"I tell you it doesn't matter," he said impatiently. "They wouldn't catch me. I know more than any of them."

"Oh!" Jennifer leaned back, covering her face. "And you are so proud of what you have done in your work."

"I would be more proud of your love for me," he said sincerely.

"And then?"

"I could get work somehow. Anything that paid. I'm strong. And I am good at draughtsmanship. I might get

into an architect's office. I wouldn't let things be hard for you, Jennifer."

He came near, almost timidly, as though afraid that she might deny that which she seemed to be giving. Her eyes ran over. He was blooded to the wild ways and the long trails. The very breath of them spoke in his daily speech, and she knew she had never plumbed his love for her until now.

"I told you once before that you were a better man than I knew," she said. "I tell you again. There is something too great in you to be spoiled, Dick. You must make it easy for me to do what I know to be right."

His face darkened again. He knelt a knee on the couch beside her.

"There is nothing great in me except my love for you," he said. "With your love I might make something of my life, even if I—though I give this work up. But if you send me away I can't say what I shall do, Jennifer. There is nothing in me which holds me straight. I don't want to be held straight."

"Not for my sake?"

"No. Not for your sake, without you. You don't know very much of a man's temper, Jennifer. And you don't know the work I'm on just now. They are sending me out after Grange's Andree. She is wanted, and I'm to go till I find her."

He spoke roughly, wanting to rouse her jealousy. But he felt the unworthiness of his thought when she looked up at him.

"Poor Andree," she said. "Poor, poor Andree. Oh, Dick, be good to her. She cares for you, and she is too—too ignorant to hide it."

"I know she cares. I taught her to," he said.

Jennifer put out her hand to him.

"Don't hurt us both that way, dear," she said. "Can't we say good-bye without hard words?"

"God knows," he said. "I don't see how we're going to say it at all. I don't see why we should say it." He gripped both her hands suddenly, bringing his face near. It was very white, and the forehead was wet.

"Jennifer," he said, "I need you. Don't turn me away. I need you. I don't know what I may do."

He was speaking with a premonition of what was to come upon him. She shivered, but her eyes were steady.

"It's something beyond me, Dick," she said. "I know I must send you away. I know. You must find your own salvation, and fight your fight alone."

"Then you don't love me as I love you," he said huskily

" You are not willing to give up even a private scruple for me."

He did not say what he had been willing to give up for her. But she knew, though even then she did not know all.

" I would give up my life for you," she said. " But the other thing is not mine to give. It belongs to God."

She said it quite simply, as though she believed it. Dick looked at her a moment. Then he stood up, drawing his breath in between his teeth.

" That ends it, I fancy," he said. " I suppose you hope that some day I'll come to love that Power which you have set up between us. I am not quite such a fool, Jennifer. I shall never do anything but hate it."

He turned down the room as though to leave her without another word. But at the door he wheeled swiftly and came back ; caught her close in his arms ; kissed her once on the lips, and let her go. She heard his quick, firm tread across the floor and the decisive shutting of the door. And then she dropped down on the couch in a little heap with her face covered.

Jennifer's mother also heard the shutting of the door. She had been listening for it ever since she came down the passage-way more than half an hour ago, and found Dick's coat and cap outside the door. She had seen the shining buttons of the Mounted Police among the fur, and with a sudden chill at her heart she had stooped and felt the lining of the thick coat and the cap. They were quite cold, and then she knew to whom they must belong. If it were any other man Jennifer would have come to call her long since.

She went back to her room, sitting with the door half-open, and listening for that step. She had never seen Dick. She had not known his name until she came to Grey Wolf. Jennifer never spoke of him. But she knew the hold that he had on her daughter's heart, and she knew that she was helpless here. She, with all her love and her long years of cherishing, was helpless against this unknown man who had trodden farther into Jennifer's heart than she could ever tread. She sat still in her chair, with her delicate wrinkled hands pressed together, and waited for him to come by. And when she heard the door shut she went out into the passage swiftly, so that he must pass her as he came.

She watched him come, walking straightly. He held his cap in his hand, and his big coat fell open, showing the dull blurr of khaki. He came as a man who knew his way ; glancing at her carelessly with bold, imperious eyes that seemed to look through her and pass on. To his knowledge he did not see her at all. He did not hear her. But he was vivid enough to her. She never forgot the sensation of his

passing her; the free, swinging step; the erect head-carriage, and that rush of vitality which seemed to quicken the air about him as he moved. He turned down the angle of the passage, and she heard him go through the front door and shut it. The very clap of its shutting frightened her. That man was not made of the stuff which is easily mastered. If Jennifer had sent him away again, then there had been a battle first which her gentle heart quaked to think of.

Twice she went down to the closed door of the sitting-room, and twice she crept away again. Then, with sudden courage, she opened the door and went in. Jennifer sprang up with a sudden cry. Then, seeing her mother, she dropped back, trembling and trying to smile.

"Why, what a start you gave me, little mother," she said.

The elder woman came over, and took the cold hands and fondled them. Almost she was afraid to speak. It seemed as though her daughter were gone into a different world: a place where she could not follow; where she did not understand the language. Then, nervously, she said:

"Someone passed me just now in the passage, dear."

"Oh!" Jennifer drew in a long breath, and the colour came painfully back to her face.

"It was—it was Mr. Heriot, dear?"

"Yes, mother."

"Is he—do you expect him to come back again, Jennifer?"

"No, mother."

Then suddenly Jennifer turned and flung her arms round her mother's neck.

"Hold me tight—tight," she sobbed. "Pretend I'm your little baby girl again, mumsie. Oh, hold me tight; mother, mother!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

"THE EPITOME OF LIFE."

"A la claire fontaine
M'en allant promener;
J'ai trouver l'eau si belle
Que je m'y suis baigné."

THE strong, soft voice died out as the passing breed swung by on his snow-shoes through the clear, frosty night. Slicker turned back from the window with the hard lines of his young face softened too. But he did not cross the room where, at one end of the table, the men of the Split Lake Detachment were gathered in a mist of tobacco-smoke and a silence broken only by the curt sentences as the cards went round. Slicker was one of the four at that table usually; but a prospector passing through to the North had taken his place to-night, and so Slicker had stood at the window and heard the breed sing and felt a wave of home-sickness for the old life with Jennifer and Dick and Tempest in it.

For three months now he had known this Split Lake life; and to him it had been a time of stagnation and of numbing ideals. He had expected so much from the call to which he had answered; knowing as he did the work at Grey Wolf, the stern self-denial and the long hours of labour on an undermanned, difficult post. Slicker had prepared himself for that. He was ardent for self-sacrifice. He was ready to die on the trail if need be for the glory of service. He was eager to serve nobly and with his whole heart. And Life had required of him another test than this. It had sent him to one for which he was ill-prepared and ill-fitted. It had sent him to a lonely post where the only give-and-take of thought was from these men at the table; where there was little work to do and less to see and less still to think about. This detachment was a integral part of the whole: it guarded a line; it made a nucleus for a mighty tract of country. But few people passed that line—few came in to it from the country. It was there as a warning and a promise, but it had few chances for fulfilling either.

When the winter wood was drawn and cut; when the walls, were muddied-up, and the sleds overhauled, and a few more necessary things done, work was at a dead-lock—until something happened. And things did not often happen at Split Lake. The other men accepted the stagnation contentedly enough. They slept a good deal, they smoked, and they played cards; and, according to Cordy's assertion, they "pegged along very comfortably." But for Slicker with his young high heart and his aspirations the life was a purgatory. He puckered his brows, looking at the men with a kind of hate. He was so tired of them: of little Hopper, the Sergeant, morose and nervous and with a curious dread of being left alone; of the dull, stupid Smith, with his limited, coarse thoughts; even of Cordy, the light-hearted gentleman who was his one friend and who was always full of laughing regrets that he could not cease to dress and move like a man of the London Clubs. Slicker wondered idly why Cordy had ever come away from them; why he didn't go back. And then, suddenly, he saw Hopper, the nervous little Sergeant, who was playing on Cordy's right, thrust his chair back and stand up.

"I've had enough," he said, in that uncertainly defiant voice of his. "There's some kinds of luck a man can't play against."

Smith looked up with a whistle of amaze, but the man on Cordy's left sat still. If Hopper was his host, so was Cordy. Cordy swept up the cards.

"Perhaps you'll have better luck next time," he said pleasantly.

"There won't be a next time." Hopper gripped the chair-back fiercely, and Slicker came forward in a hurry. He felt as though the hinted accusation had been flung at himself. But Cordy was untroubled. He lifted his eyebrows.

"Just as you like, of course," he said. "Hallo, Slicker. Will you take a hand?"

"Don't you. Unless you've got more money than you want to keep."

"Oh! I say," said Slicker, and turned from Hopper's scarlet face to Cordy, expecting to see the anger that he knew was in his own eyes. But Cordy laughed, although there was a dull flush on his cheeks.

"Losers are allowed some latitude," he said. "I'm sorry, Hopper, but you can't win every time. Just see what your luck last night has done to your temper!"

"We were not playing for such big stakes last night."

"Lord, man; you don't call these big stakes! Don't be sarcastic. Coming, Slicker?"

A moment Slicker hesitated. Then he slipped into Hopper's chair, and Hopper turned and walked out of the room

sharply. The game went on, and Cordy's easy manner soon brushed the restraint off it. But Slicker played badly. He felt vaguely outraged; not so much at the accusation as at the fact that Cordy did not seem to resent it. For his own honour, for the honour of the Force, for the honour of this little post itself, Cordy ought to have resented it before this quiet-eyed, observant civilian who lost his money with such equanimity. Slicker had worked himself into acute indignation by the time the evening was done and Cordy had cheerfully seen the prospector into his room down the passage and had come back to turn the lamp out. Smith was gone; but Slicker sat at the table with his blue eyes alight and that square look on his jaw which Cordy had come to know. He went straight to his point.

"Why didn't you give Hopper the lie just now?" he demanded.

Cordy yawned. But there was an unpleasant look in his eyes.

"This life imposes bonds considerably tighter than the marriage-bond, my dear boy," he said. "I have probably got to live with Hopper for the next few years—and he is my boss."

"Will it improve the situation to have him think you a cheat?"

"My dear Slicker!" Cordy laughed, but his cheeks took their dull flush again. "You haven't learnt the graces of speech yet. Why, of course, it will improve it. Hopper will bear anything better than contradiction. And how could I disabuse his mind except by my fists? I don't want to go out of here in irons."

"If you'd given him your word of honour he'd have had to believe you!"

Cordy glanced at him sharply. There was something of envy and of pain in the quickly-veiled eyes. He knew, and Hopper knew, why he did not offer his word of honour. And Hopper knew, as he knew, that the matter would have to blow over simply because these lonely men dared not make their daily life intolerable. Cordy registered a determination that Hopper should be his partner for a few times when a fellow came by who was worth fleecing. That would shut Hopper's mouth if nothing else would. He yawned again.

"Oh, my dear boy, what do these louts know about a word of honour?" he said. Then he laughed softly, drawing up his coat as he stood before the stove. "That reminds me of a funny story that happened to a chap I knew in England." He paused, with light raillery in his eyes. "I don't know if you're old enough to hear it," he added.

Slicker fingered his lip where the soft down was already

beginning to part itself into a moustache. This touched him on the quick as Cordy knew.

"Go on," he said surlily. And he laughed when it was told; for it was very funny, and Cordy's subtle delineations flattered his raw manhood. But he went to bed more uneasy than he cared to allow. That little song had in some way brought Jennifer and Tempest very clearly into his mind. And he did not care to think of them in connection with Cordy.

For several days the thought of Tempest possessed him. He knew, of course, that Tempest was at Churchill and that he would probably come out as soon as he was fit. He realised that of late he had not been very anxious to see Tempest again, and with that straight courage which seldom failed him he sought the reason and found it. He did not want to have Cordy tell Tempest that he and Slicker were such good chums. And he knew just exactly how Cordy would say it, too. This matter kept him sulky until he found a solution where nine-tenths of humanity finds it, in a compromise. He could not quarrel with Cordy. That would be absurd; besides, the old fellow was really such awfully good company. And he could not tell him that his way of looking at life was not elevating. Cordy had seen much more of life than Slicker, and he would think Slicker a fool. No; he could not behave differently to Cordy, but he would not let what Cordy said hurt him. "A fellow can laugh at a joke without approving of it," he told himself.

But when Tempest came Slicker was taken unawares. For Cordy groaned.

"Don't you think it's likely to be—well—to be a little dull to-night?" he asked. "I wouldn't say anything against the Inspector, of course. But he will inspect more than our kits and our teeth, won't he? Have you got your soul cleaned up, Slicker?"

"Tempest doesn't preach," said Slicker, but he reddened.

"Oh, my dear boy, no. He's a gentleman, of course. But can't you just see how Tempest, the immaculate, will look on us, the erring ones. He won't say anything, of course; but he'll purse his mouth up and shake his head inside himself at our card-playing. I'm going to take the very shirt off you to-night, Slicker. But I'll let you have it back to-morrow. As philosophers, you know, we are bound to meet circumstances as cheerfully as we can."

"Tempest plays cards himself," said Slicker.

"Cribbage," suggested Cordy. "Or is it patience, Slicker?"

Slicker laughed with him, although he felt the treachery to Tempest. But he went away thinking that perhaps Tempest was a little—well, not exactly the sort of fellow one would set out to have a jolly time with. And Cordy was.

But Cordy had made a miscalculation when he asserted that Tempest would not say anything. Acting on this belief he forced animal spirits to take the place of the drink which was debarred at the detachment, and in a little while he heard Tempest come down the passage which separated the mess-room from Hopper's quarters. Tempest stood in the door, smiling at Slicker, who, stripped to shirt and trousers and with his hair wild, was attempting to sand-bag Cordy as the elder man dodged and feinted and doubled. There was considerable skill shown by both, and Tempest dropped into a chair and watched them. It was against strict etiquette, but he had known Slicker so well once. He had been in a little earlier in the evening, waiting for Hopper to finish a game of cards, and he looked on now with a very much clearer knowledge of Cordy than Cordy imagined. And neither he nor Hopper guessed why Tempest had insisted that the Sergeant should finish his game. Nor why Tempest came back now.

They were exhausted presently, and Tempest made them sit down and talk. He had not seen Slicker since the boy had worn the khaki, and he chaffed him about it, good-naturedly and cleverly enough to make Cordy laugh once. In some way this astonished Slicker. He was coming to look on stronger meat as the only possible material for jokes. And that Cordy should laugh raised his opinion of Tempest considerably. But the real mischief in Cordy which had enabled him to weather all the winds that buffeted him was his undoing very presently. Slicker never quite remembered at what point of the conversation he felt Tempest look at him ; look again, and finally break in on Cordy's easy-flowing speech.

" Slicker," he said, " I wish you'd ask the Sergeant if my kit has been taken to my room. And I'm going to ask you to unpack it for me. I can't do much stooping yet."

What Tempest said to Cordy after the door was shut Slicker never knew in the least, for Cordy showed no after-signs of it. But what Tempest said to Slicker himself Slicker knew very certainly. Tempest had an apt directness of speech on some occasions.

" I am going to use a very unpleasant simile, Slicker," he said ; " and I am using it because I think it more appropriate than any other. There are many men and animals which are attracted by vile smells and tastes—high game, rotten cheese, asafœtida, and all that kind of thing. Those are the physical attractions. Animals—we say unfortunately for them, but there may be some doubts about that—cannot be attracted on the mental side as men must be—and are. Your friend Cordy is mentally attracted by mental Bombay ducks and putrid game. I won't add garlic ; that's a healthy smell, though I don't like it myself."

Slicker wriggled on his chair, but his manner suggested that he had expected something of this sort and was indifferent to it. Tempest looked at him narrowly.

"How long have you been here, Slicker?" he asked.

"Four months," said Slicker sulkily.

"And Cordy is the only friend you've got?"

"There's no one else."

"No. There's no one else, I suppose. I wonder if you remember anything of what I said that day in Grey Wolf when you asked me if you should join the Force?"

"Yes. But—but I say, Tempest"—Slicker forgot his rank and uniform—"a fellow can't stay a kid all his life. I've got to do as men do when I'm with them, you know."

"Do I? But why not make them do as you do?"

This was a new thought to Slicker. He stared.

"I couldn't," he said.

"You mean that you have not enough character; not enough initiative, or brain, or common-sense?"

This was not pretty, put into words. Slicker reddened, standing still.

"Poor old fellow," said Tempest. "It isn't easy, is it? But you didn't expect ease when you gave yourself to us."

"I don't want ease," burst out Slicker. "I want work, and there's nothing to do here. That's the—the damnable part of it all. There's nothing to do and nothing to drink, and so I fool around with Cordy. I can't help it."

"Well," said Tempest, "you remember our motto, don't you? We maintain the right over a fairly big jurisdiction—several million square miles. But that's not so much to be proud of if we can't maintain it over ourselves. I don't know if there are many men fit to preach to other men on that exact point. I'm not. We all have some special place where we fail most, Slicker, and it will probably trip us more or less all our lives. But because a fellow has fallen over a stone he is not debarred from shouting a warning to the fellow behind. I have no right to do more than shout the warning. But you'll allow me that, won't you?"

"I wish to goodness I'd been put somewhere under you."

"That wouldn't be very much use. We can't do such a tremendous lot for each other, old fellow. And if we try we perhaps make things worse."

He was thinking of something which had been done to himself under the name of help. Slicker saw the shade on his face, and the crust of these latter days split through completely.

"You know—sometimes when I used to hear you and Jennifer yarning about all kinds of things—or when you used to get on to Dick, and the old beggar would smoke

and grin quietly till he had you up on your feet—then I felt that I—that I wanted to—to go out and do some of the big things that fellows did in the old days. I did really, Tempest. And now—to have nothing to do. It's knocked the bottom out of all my ideas. It's a rotten life."

"There's the army that pushes the trail through into the enemy's country, and there are the details who guard the line. They are of equal importance." Tempest smiled. "You may not have to be a detail for long," he said. "But if you are you must remember that you're necessary or you wouldn't be here. I mentioned to Cordy that he wasn't exactly the man I'd choose for an intimate friend, and he may profit by the hint or he may take his revenge out of you. But more probably he won't do either. I'm going straight through to Regina now, and I'll see what I can do there. But if I can't do anything, you remember, Slicker, that Cordy is better as an enemy than as a friend." Tempest screwed his face up as though he tasted something unpleasant. "He's a highly-specialised and refined beast," he said. "And they're the worse sort. I hate to know that there are such fellows in the Force. It gives some people a chance to call us a refuge for derelicts; though, thank Heaven, I don't think there are many like him."

Tempest did not forget his promise when he came to report to the Commissioner at Regina three weeks later. He touched on the matter lightly, with an apology.

"For the boy joined on my recommendation," he said. "And he's a clever boy. I think he may be worth a good deal to us if he has a fair start. He has a temperament which takes up some things very enthusiastically."

"Then he probably won't stay with us. The work is not what it was when I was on patrol. Too much sentry-go and too little whiskey-smuggling and raiding to please the men. Isn't that so?"

"Why, certainly—in some cases." Tempest thought of Dick. "But I believe young Warriner would want to stay if he had more to do."

"Well, I'll make a note of it. Perhaps I can move him. You say that one of the men is a bad companion for him?"

"Undoubtedly. I shouldn't wonder if you had trouble with him later. Other parts of the world have possibly had trouble with him already."

"I'll make a note of that, too." The Commissioner turned from the subject with relief. "You are not quite strong yet? I notice that you limp a little. It started from a fall, did it?"

"The rheumatism settled in my hip. But I'll be all right once the warm weather comes. Yes; it was a fall. I ricked myself."

"Ah! I want to put you in charge of the Mackenzie District, Tempest. Channing has resigned, and he comes out this summer. You'll get your furlough first, of course. But if the doctor won't pass you I don't quite know what I'm going to do."

"He will pass me," said Tempest quietly.

He sat silent for a minute, trying to brace himself for the next thing which he wanted to say. Andree was seldom long away from his thoughts; but as he got nearer Regina she filled them up with a completeness which was absolute torture. Sight of the familiar little chapel and the prison across the barrack square had made him giddy with the flood of realisation. Was Andree now shut in Fort Saskatchewan prison? Had she met her death there, or did she live still? His love for her was now protection and pity only; but the memory of what had been was sharp. He turned in his chair with his face from the light.

"Corporal Heriot brought out some more information about the Robison-Ogilvie case," he said. "Has it been followed up?"

The Commissioner frowned.

"That is the worst case we have had in the Force," he said. "I hate to think of it. We have hanged an innocent man, and the girl who is responsible for two deaths has gone off to the North somewhere. I sent Heriot after her at once, and he'll get her if anyone can. But I don't expect to hear any more for a long while yet. She had about two months' start."

Tempest had schooled himself to hear something which would hurt. But not all his self-control was quite sufficient. The Commissioner looked up.

"You knew something about her, too, did you? I remember that Heriot was very averse to going. Had he—but that is no business of mine. I told him not to come back without her, and he is too keen on his work to fail."

Tempest stood up, smiling a little.

"No. I don't expect that he will fail," he said. "And I must ask you to excuse me, sir. I'm sleeping at the Ferrars' to-night, and they have people coming for dinner, so I'll have to go round and borrow some clothes. I have only my kit here."

But he walked across the Square to the married officers' quarters and up to his room in Ferrars' house without thinking any more about the clothes. He did not quite know what he thought until he caught his eyes asking him the question from the mirror. It was chiefly the eyes which told how Tempest had suffered. The eager glow in them was quenched, and the steady light which shone instead kept its gravity, even when he smiled. There were a few white threads in the thick hair,

and the temporal arteries showed more clearly. But the wind-tanned, muscle-hard face held its fine lines still, and his mouth had not lost its sweetness.

"Dick!" he said to the eyes in the mirror. "Dick!"

He sat down, hiding his face in his hands, shaking with the rebellion against life which swept over him. He judged Dick as more merciless, more indifferent, more wilfully cruel than he really was, and for the moment he hated most fiercely the man who had been his friend and whom he loved still, as he knew that Dick loved him. Dick would not fail. He would bring Andree back to that justice which had waited her overlong. And Andree loved him. Tempest did not dare let himself think for many minutes on that flight and the return. He got up and went out through the grey chill dusk to borrow a mess suit from Charteris or Bayne or someone else.

Charteris could not lend, because he also was going to dinner at the Ferrars'; but he arranged the matter for Tempest, insisted on his dressing at the Bachelor Quarters, and walked over with him afterwards. Charteris was a good-natured, obtuse man with a tendency to spread himself over the affairs of others, and he made the conversation at table more personal than Tempest desired. He had just been East for his leave, and had stayed with Tempest's people, and he did not forget it.

"They'll never let you come back a bachelor, Tempest," he said. "There's your sister engaged and Lloyd married, and young Stuart thinking about it. You will have to take the plunge some day, you know. Ferrars can tell you that it isn't as bad as it's supposed to be."

"Ferrars had a special inducement." Tempest turned to Mrs. Ferrars with his smiling courtesy. "And also a good deal of conceit. There is no other occasion on which a man needs such a good opinion of himself, is there?"

"Except in the dock. It's marvellous how nerve will carry a fellow through then. Does anyone remember that case of young Claverley——"

"We have all forgotten it, Charteris," said Ferrars blandly. "And we are not going to be pilloried for our ignorance. It would be quite as hopeless as discussing the Balkan trouble or the reason why so many men prefer death in an aeroplane to life on the earth."

"Or a year's isolation round the rim of the Pole to city comforts. How long since you have eaten with a silver fork or drunk wine, Tempest?"

"I forget. But I have bore those deprivations with much greater equanimity than I bore the loss of my razor when a breed upset all my dunnage in Pelican Rapids. It's awful how a man accustomed to a smooth face loses his self-respect when he can't shave for weeks at a time."

The pretty girl at Tempest's side looked up at him. Mrs. Ferrars had placed her there in order that she should.

"Fancy thinking of that in such a strenuous life. How wonderful you are," she sighed.

"I know," admitted Tempest. "But so few people recognise it. I have to be Bowdlerised for ordinary conversation, you see."

"He means that the person who hasn't been there only understands and commends us for the obvious things," interpreted Bolton, who was an Inspector himself. "And they are never the things that are of any consequence."

"Oh," murmured a soft voice on Tempest's other side, "Clothes, for instance."

"My dear Christine," Mrs. Ferrar laughed. "We women and our ideas don't count on the outside edges of things."

"I mean to count," said Christine. She glanced up at Tempest with a spark of challenge in her dark eyes. "Are sweethearts and wives among the deprivations which you men of the police can bear with equanimity?" she demanded.

Tempest knew her for the wife of a young Englishman who had just entered the Force. It was suspected that he had done it for the sake of excitement, and that he would not stay in it long. He smiled quietly.

"You must ask someone who is better qualified to give an opinion," he said. "In poetical phraseology I happen to be wedded to my work, and so I have all I want of life, you see."

The young eyes questioned his a moment longer, and he bore the look unflinchingly. It was the stand he meant to take all his life through now. But he was relieved when the two women were gone. Good wine, and a good cigar, and the talk and voices of the men of his own class were very comforting to him after the five strait years of naked necessities only.

A little later the name of Ducane came up. Tempest was known to be connected with the case, and Bolton asked questions.

"I am working it up here," he said. "The man is a worm. He turned King's Evidence and told every mortal thing he knew. So he's out on bail, pending the arrest of the others. We have two of them, but the rest have disappeared. Of course we'll get them, though it may take time. It is going to be quite a big affair, for people have been wanting to get at the basis of the Canada Home-lot Extension Company for some time. You knew Heriot, Tempest? He was under you at Grey Wolf, wasn't he?"

"Yes."

"Bad luck for him that he hadn't the chance to carry this thing through. He would probably have got his step over it.

He's a clever chap, too. A confoundedly clever chap. But there's a kink in him somewhere, to my mind. I fancy he is safer hunting criminals along the Mackenzie than knocking around among civilized beings. Didn't you find him hard to manage ? "

" Not particularly. You said Ducane was out on bail. Where is he ? "

" Gone back to his wife at Grey Wolf, I believe. Poor little woman, she'll need to be good stuff to stand him. And she is good stuff, I know. One of our oldest Toronto families. Eh ? Why, yes. She did go home for a while. But she came back to Grey Wolf. I happened to see her on Regina station the day she passed through. She has wonderful eyes."

Tempest assented absently. He wondered if Jennifer had gone back to Grey Wolf to take care of Andree. And he wondered what she was doing there now with Ducane. Before the evening was over he had made his mind up on one point. He would spend the first two months of his leave in a fleeting visit to Grey Wolf. Jennifer deserved that of him. And, besides, she could tell him so much about Andree.

In the bachelor quarters several of the men spoke about Tempest later on. Bolton was genuinely troubled.

" He's as good a fellow as ever, of course," he said. " But he looks as if he'd had a knock."

" Had a knock ! He looks as if he'd been shot sitting and drilled clean through," declared Charteris. " I hope his folk will marry him off, down East. A good, comfortable, domesticated life is what he wants. He should give up the Force. You can see he's had enough of it."

But before Tempest went East he presented himself one warm, wet spring morning at the house across the lake from Grey Wolf, and heard Jennifer's cry of joy, and felt the grasp of her hands as she welcomed him.

" Oh," she said. " How I wish you had six hands to shake, I can't tell you how glad I am. And you haven't got this district, have you ? That would be too splendid to be true."

" Yes ; I'm afraid it would. I'm on leave, and I'm spending a part of it in hunting up my old friends." He looked at her intently. " I came to see if you needed help," he said.

" That is like you." Jennifer's eyes met his bravely. " You will see Harry directly, and I shall be glad to talk to you afterwards. Here's mother. And mother and I hunt through every day for all the fun we can get out of it, you know. It makes life so much more—more bearable."

Tempest understood completely why she chose that epithet when Ducane came in to lunch. The fellow was a wreck of the burly, blustering man whom Grey Wolf had once known. He shuffled in his walk, hanging his head. The shadow of the

cells was on him, and horror of the future showed in his shifty eyes and in his manner. He alternately raved at Jennifer and cajoled her. He cringed to Tempest, and when the two men went out under the light spring rain with their pipes he gave way altogether; shivering and sobbing; cursing Dick and himself and the law, and imploring Tempest to help him.

"It would be so hard on Jenny to have me in—in—locked up again," he whined. "And she's been a good wife to me always. I don't deserve it. I know I don't deserve it. But she knows I'm fond of her. She knows it. Poor Jenny."

It was a horrible exhibition to Tempest; but he bore with it in patience. Even so little as he could do eased the burden for those brave women in the house. And, for all the fallen manhood in Ducane; for all the shameful thing which he had become, there was still that redeeming feature in him. He loved Jennifer. After each burst of passion he came to her like a dog, whimpering for forgiveness. His eyes followed her about the room, and the touch of her hand soothed him in his sudden fits of excitement. Tempest guessed that if Ducane were parted from that sweet womanly strength on which he fed he would soon be parted from life also. And in his heart he hoped that that day might come soon.

On the second night, when Ducane, cross and sleepy as a child, had stumbled off to bed, Jennifer slid her arm through her mother's.

"Mr. Tempest is going in the morning, little mother," she said. "And I have got one or two things to scold him about privately. You don't mind, darling? I knew you wouldn't." Then, when the door was shut, she drew a chair for Tempest up to the fire, and sat down in a corner of the lounge where she had said good-bye to Dick.

"I want to speak to you about Andree," she began at once, not looking at Tempest. "When I got your letter I came back to look after her. Don't thank me. I had nearly decided to come, anyway. And I was glad of the excuse. I did what I could." She paused a moment. "She cared for him too much to look at anyone else. And then she went North. I had not heard of any reason why she should go until Mr. Heriot told me that he had been sent after her. She did not come to say good-bye to me. I am sorry that I failed to—to understand her better. I did try. But Andree never cared about women."

Tempest sat back in his chair for a long while, staring into the fire. At last he said slowly:

"You saw Heriot as he came through?"

"Yes."

"And she loved him still? As much as ever?"

Jennifer felt her eyes fill. She knew how this man had loved Grange's Andree.

"He seemed to have wakened her heart, and so he possessed it. I think they both realise that."

Tempest was silent again. His hand shaded his face, but Jennifer could guess something of his thoughts. For a little she struggled with herself, trying to brace herself to give him comfort which it was going to hurt her unspeakably to give. She laid her hand lightly on his knee for a moment.

"You are afraid that she will tempt him to—to forget his work and to run away with her, or—or something of that sort. He won't, Mr. Tempest. And he won't be cruel to her. I think he will try to treat her as I would want him to treat her."

Tempest looked up sharply.

"How do you know that?"

"Because he loves me and I love him. And we have told each other so," said Jennifer bravely.

Tempest stared at her, not conscious that he was staring.

"Is that true?" he said.

"Yes."

"My God!" said Tempest. He put his hand up to his forehead. "He—he has——" He looked away, stunned by the revelation. "You—you can't mean—but how could he ever have——"

"Each time I sent him away it maddened him. I can't understand. Perhaps you can't, either. But—I have had to understand that it did not alter his feeling for me. I could not blind my eyes to that."

"But——" he fell into thought again. Then he seemed to catch hold of his natural courtesy. "I did not deserve this nobleness from you," he said. "I think no woman could have done a more gracious act."

"I had to." Jennifer was speaking very low and levelly, with her hands gripped tight. "I trust him, and you must trust him too."

"But—you said you sent him away? And last time—I—I beg your pardon. I didn't mean to——"

"Last time was different," said Jennifer steadily. "He—we said more than we had done before. We knew that—there could not be anyone else. You see he understood that he had perhaps brought Harry back to me."

Tempest shivered. Beside this tragedy even his own seemed to have faded. For he did not love—he never had loved Andree as Dick assuredly would love this woman. The thought brought him to his feet with his pulses beating unevenly and his voice unsteady.

"I do not know how to thank you for telling me this. It explains so much. And I had never guessed—good Heavens! Why, I—I—asked you to look after Andree because——"

"That did not matter very much." Jennifer smiled faintly. "He wrote to me before he went North with you. Just a few lines, but they made the matter clear. I mean—they did not palliate it. He has never tried to do that with anything in his life."

Tempest leaned his elbows on the mantel-shelf, pressing his temples with his fingers. This man who had lived with him daily, for weeks, for months, for years, had had this in his heart all the while.

"And—and his evidence at the trial?" he said.

"He did not mind what people said of himself. He tried to make it easy for me. And he would not make excuses for what he had done to me. He had done it, and he let me know it. He—he used that work as a weapon to—to fight himself with in part. And—and he would not let me think him better than he was."

Tempest nodded. He knew that love can be as merciless as hate. Dick would have Jennifer's love, and his bold temper would insist that he had it in spite of what she knew of him.

"And he knew that he left you to—this," he said slowly.

Jennifer did not answer. Memories were too keenly sharp. The thoughts of both were with the man somewhere out along the far trails in the silence.

The fire fell together with a crash, and Jennifer looked up.

"Have you forgiven him for what he did to you?" she asked.

"I thought I had. I know now that I had not. I can guess a little at what pain would do to a man of his temperament. If I had only known—but he would not tell me, of course. He could not."

"But you can forgive him now?"

"I have already forgiven him officially," Tempest smiled a little bitterly. "And I can't cease to care for him. I don't know if I shall ever feel the same way towards him again. He did a great wrong, not to me, but to her."

"No one could have expected her to care."

"He knew his power with women. I beg your pardon——"

"Please don't. He has been quite honest with me, and so there is no need."

There was silence again until Tempest straightened himself and looked at her.

"You make me ashamed," he said. "I have seen your gentleness and your care of Ducane, and now I have seen—something that I can't speak about. I had thought we men of the Mounted Police were doing a great thing for Canada. But perhaps when all is made clear we'll understand that some of the greatest things done here have been done by the women. You—you still intend to look after him?"

"So long as I can. If they imprison him I shall get rooms near the prison. He needs me."

"I shall be in the North later, as I told you. But my leave lasts four months yet, and if you want me during that time you know how gladly I will come. And if ever there is anything I can do and that I can free myself for, you will tell me?"

"I surely will." She stood up and gave him her hand. "I hope I have helped you, for your sympathy has helped me. There are certain things which one cannot fight against. We have to order our lives from that standpoint. But there are so many things which we can. And, after all, the epitome of Life is battle and conquest, isn't it?"

"Or defeat."

"There are high defeats which are better than low conquests," said Jennifer, and her words stayed with him when she went away and left him alone by the dying fire.

Would not those words of Jennifer's apply to more than the abstract case? Had he not himself been seeking conquest along infinitely lower lines than this high defeat which had overtaken Jennifer and Dick? Nature had insisted that he should love Andree even as it had insisted that Dick should love Jennifer. But must a man always accept Nature's ordinances from end to end? Is it not against old Nature that her sons and daughters have to do their fighting with conscience as the umpire? Tempest knew, as he had known for long, what must have happened if he had persuaded Andree to marry him. She could have been no helpmate for his soul. He could never have made her other than she was. And yet nothing but the knowledge that he could not get her had parted him from her. Then those things which he used to talk of. That conception about the Norse Edda: he had believed that he had stumbled on a great truth there. But in how far had he acted on it? Dick had frankly acknowledged his preference for Gigungagap. Tempest had talked of the higher planes—he could remember now the thrill and the certainty with which he had spoken. Then were all his great dreams, all his aspirations and beliefs dead leaves only; ropes of sand; dust that the first wind of desire blew out of existence?

"Oh God! Not that! Not that!" he cried. He had surely struggled. He had schooled himself to accept the inevitable—when he was very sure that it was the inevitable. He had now lifted this love into a sacred thing which he could think of without shame and without passion. But who had enabled him to do this? Not his own strength. Not his own conscience nor his love for that work which he had believed meant more to him than anything else. It was Dick who had thrust him back; brutally, mercilessly, but faithfully into

the battle. And he could not forgive and he could not forget because Andree had been sacrificed that this should be accomplished. And yet he had consented that Dick should sacrifice Jennifer for his work's sake. He had seen very clearly there how the individual must perish to further the growth of the whole. But where the matter touched himself; where Andree had to go that he might give what the years, what his birth and training and traditions, had made him for the aid of the many, what had he cared for his work then?

He got up, walking through the dusky room as Dick had walked on the night when he pleaded with Jennifer. Through these months Dick must have been fighting nearly as stern a battle as himself. He would suffer for what Jennifer might have to undergo with Ducane as Tempest suffered for Andree. But Dick had never let his work go. Wild-hearted, bitter-minded unbeliever though he was, he had held valiantly to his work, even using it, as Jennifer had said, for a sword against himself. He remembered the cruel mockery of those sketches in the Grey Wolf bunk-room. Dick had no more to help him through life than what they told. He had nothing to hold to. What wonder then if he fell? But had he fallen any further than Tempest? Than Tempest, who knew and preached the right—to others?"

Tempest went late to his bed that night, and when he said good-bye to Jennifer in the morning his manner was very gentle.

"I owe you a very great deal," he said. "And I owe Dick a very great deal." He smiled. "He knew that before I did," he added. "But perhaps he can bear to hear it again."

He saw Bolton for a moment on the Regina Station as the train carried him East, and the jovial Inspector shook his hand warmly.

"'Pon my soul, you look better already, old fellow," he said. "Wait till the pretty girls in Ontario get hold of you. They'll knock ten years off you."

"Thank you," said Tempest. "I think I don't want to lose those years, Bolton. Not a blessed one of them."

His welcome at home shamed him again. They were so transparently joyful at his coming and he had wanted so little to come. He knew that all the great issues of his life were bound up for ever with the West: with the places where he had suffered and lost and gained so much. And yet he found that there was something for him to gain in the old home. Some panacea which he had needed and which nothing else could have given him. He found it in his mother's kiss, and in Betty's throttling embraces, and in Lloyd's hand-grip. It was Lloyd who got down to the heart of the matter at once, reading him as a man reads his kind.

"You won't get old Neil to cut the Service and settle down over here, mother," he said. "You may trot out your eligibles and stay him with dinner-parties and comfort him with dances all you know—and it won't help you worth a cent. Something else has booked him, mother, and we're going to lose him."

"Oh, Lloyd! You don't think that any girl out there——"

"No. Or if there was he's lost her. But I noticed him talking with Carter and Orde last night. It's Canada has taken him, I guess. He means to give himself to his work, and not to anything else."

Betty scoffed at this doctrine and angled for him with all the arts which she and her friends could muster. In the first glow of her own love she appealed to Tempest vividly, and he delighted to take her about. She was much younger than himself, and she had been a merry child when he was a tall and studious boy. She was a merry girl still, and she brought the sweets of life back to him in many ways through those brief weeks. Tempest had that quiet, interested courtesy which charms wherever it goes; but his serene indifference to its effects roused Betty's ire, and one evening as he smoked his cigar under the scented limes she came to him, running in her white dress over the grassy lawn, and walked up and down with him. Her hand was through his arm, and she chattered to him and scolded him, half in mischief, half in real earnest. For a while Tempest parried her thrusts with good-natured evasion. Then he turned on her slim finger the ring which sparkled through the starlight.

"It's once and for altogether, Betty dear?" he asked.

"Oh, yes." She fell shy instantly at confessing her love.

"Even though you lost him—there could never be anyone else?"

"Never! Oh, never!"

"Well—that's my answer, dear," he said gently.

CHAPTER XIX.

"THE LONE PATROL."

"BUT assuredly you will be doing me the greatest of favours," said Père Melisand. "You come to me, figuratively speaking, as the men used to come to me at Rouen—with strange stories in their eyes and the smell of the salt sea-water in their hair. I have not seen the sea since I left France ten years ago. And you?"

"I saw salt water three months ago in Hudson Bay." Dick flung off his coat and looked round him. "You keep some relics of France with you still," he added. "I remember the original of that portrait at Versailles—and surely the chair below it is Louis Quinze?"

"Genuine. Yes. We have our fancies yet, though we change the skies over us. There is an incantation in these little things to one who remembers."

Dick turned to look at his host. Without the cassock and tonsure Père Melisand would have had nothing to knit him to this little Roman Catholic Mission at Vermilion on the Peace River. For he had the look of a man of the world in his eyes and the fluency of a scholar on his tongue, and he welcomed Dick to his poor quarters here just as he would have welcomed him to some old chateau in his native France, with no embarrassment at all in the contrast. Perhaps ten years had used him to it, although it had not sapped the polish of his manner. He smiled at Dick.

"I will ask Antoine to hasten dinner," he said. "You must be both cold and hungry. Travelling in a thaw is difficult work."

"Well, two of my dogs knocked up rather badly. Could I get more here?"

"Vital Jeudi might have one or two. We will see him in the morning. I wish we had some to spare at the Mission. But if there are any in Fort Vermilion be assured that you shall have them if possible."

Dick watched him go, idly wondering what power could bring such a man to waste himself among the breeds and

Indians of this Canadian outpost. Religion seemed to him such a weak answer. For Dick looked on religion still as many men look on it, as a refuge when life has little left to offer. And Père Melisand's eyes said that such a reason was untrue here.

"But it may occasionally be a refuge when life has too much to offer," he told himself, and throughout the simple dinner he watched Père Melisand in that interpretation.

The man could talk. He showed deep and wise interest in many things, and more than once his eyes lit to a fire that accorded ill with the meek tonsure. He did not smoke; but he gave Dick a good cigar, and he brought out a bottle of wine, giving a rakish air of conviviality to the evening which appealed to Dick's humour. It was over the walnuts which Père Melisand cracked with an old-fashioned silver crackers that Dick broached the business which had brought him to Vermilion through the wet dangerous drifts where the early Chinooks blew warm, and Père Melisand leaned back, caressing his chin.

"Ah, that I cannot tell you," he said. "Soeur Narcisse and Soeur Madeleine came in while I was at Battle River. There was no girl answering to your description in Vermilion when I came back. She must have gone further."

"Then might I be allowed the honour of a few minutes conversation with one of the ladies you mention?"

"Assuredly." Père Melisand's fine lips drew into a smile. "And why not?"

"If you have no reason I shall certainly not supply one," Dick smiled back. "It is very necessary for me to find her," he explained. "I'm a wanderer until I do."

"May I ask what she is wanted for?"

"Murder in the first degree. And—as an anti-climax—perjury."

"Ah!" Père Melisand shuddered. "Poor thing. And yours is a hard life, my friend, when it sends you out on such errands."

"A man must live—even, or shall I say, usually—at the expense of others. And if he cannot wipe out his own crimes he is surely doing well in assisting others to wipe out theirs."

Père Melisand shook his head, with the smile still lingering.

"Well—there is always the untamed thing that runs clamouring through our blood. There will be the doer of crimes, and the executor of crimes so long as this old world lasts. And in the next we may have to sheet those very crimes home to the opposite shoulders and begin all over again. But do not speak of this to Soeur Narcisse in the morning. I think you shall see Soeur Narcisse."

"She is perhaps not young enough to be fluttered at the sight of—shall we say—divided skirts?" suggested Dick.

Père Melisand shook his head again.

"Be careful," he said. "I learnt well that a light tongue seldom means a light heart." He cracked another nut. "You deserved that, and you do not deserve to see Soeur Narcisse. But you shall see her. And speak to her of Ouchy if you can. She comes from Ouchy, and we French love our country."

"Which is, I imagine, the reason why you leave it. A thing denied has its value enhanced, and the wisdom of the French in matters of love is fully acknowledged all the world over."

Père Melisand laughed, settling his shoulders in the tall chair.

"Come," he said. "Tell me what you know about France. We will leave your opinions on love to explain themselves. And talk French. You never learnt your wisdom in any language but ours."

Dick's answering smile did not show in his eyes. Père Melisand guessed that there had been no smile there for long. That did not surprise him, for he knew much of the lives of the wandering men; but the pity on Dick's face when he saw Soeur Narcisse next morning did. The soft-eyed, shy young nun with the strange, delicate bloom which stirs a man's heart glowed with excitement when Dick's question called her eyes up to his face.

"Mais oui," she cried. "Is it that I could forget Andree? Why—that voyage was so much of delight—so much of the new."

Over her head the men smiled. This which was stagnation to the man who had lived was life itself to little Soeur Narcisse.

"Ah! She was si belle! Si grande! Et si triste. Elle me baise quand she say adieu. And moi, I was for her so sorry."

"Andree kissed you!" Dick was curiously upset at this, for he knew Andree's utter indifference to women.

"Then you can't tell me where she went?" he asked.

"To Chipewyan. But beyond that I do not know. There were many Indians on rafts. We begged of her—stay; be one of us. Mais elle n'en peut. Elle dit il y a le vent aux cheveux. I not understand, moi. Perhap she jeter la plume au vent."

"Perhaps," said Dick. But he shivered a little. Would the death which he was bringing her ever so still Grange's Andree that she could not feel the wind of Life in her hair?

He looked at Père Melisand when the two went out to the sun again. "Didn't young Macrae of a Survey Party once try to carry off a nun from one of these places?" he asked. "You'd best look after Soeur Narcisse, sir. Men are men still. And she is meant to make some man happy."

"Because you have no religion you do not recognise your impiety," said Père Melisand composedly. "Existence means more than earthly happiness."

"My soul! D'you think I don't know that?" said Dick with a sudden flash. And through the long day's sleighing when the threatening squish of the packing mush-ice took the place of the clean burring hum of the runners, and the wind blew warm on his cheek, he remembered grimly what good cause he had to know it.

He dreaded this lone patrol as he never had dreaded one before. That night with Jennifer seemed to have slacked his physical and mental muscles. He had been knocked out in a fight for the thing he most wanted; knocked out completely, without a hope of return, and he could not forget it. There was no pride in him because he had not betrayed his work. A woman, a girl with shaking hands and the exhaustion of utter grief on her, had beaten him; had broken his will, and stripped his defiance from him, and sent him away. And he had gone. He could not discover why he had gone, and why he knew that he could not go back. He knew only that Jennifer's will was not equal to the steel of his will, and that therefore it was a power behind and beyond her which had struck at him through her. He had refused to acknowledge or obey that Power. But he had been forced to acknowledge it on Beverley Lake, and now he was forced to obey it. He hated it. He cursed at it. But still he obeyed it. And this galled him and enraged him, and poisoned the call of the North in him, day by day.

Though near the verge of breaking, the ice held still when he drove into Chipewyan some days later. But the long, straight-laid street was dirty with trampled mush and noisy with much shouting of men and snapping of the long caribou-gut whips and the fighting of loosened dog packs. The fur-hunters of the North were bringing their winter's yield into the big Hudson Bay sheds at old Chipewyan, and there was no one in the settlement who did not know it. To-day the Hudson Bay Company was king of the North as it was in the golden days of its reign, nearly three hundred years ago. From out of unnumbered solitary places the trappers came to do honour to it; deep-eyed, alert men, with that hip-rolling walk which is born of the snow-shoe and those sudden spurts into ungoverned merriment which are in the blood of the French-Indian breed.

Dick left his team at the barracks and walked down to the Hudson Bay Store. Forsyth was away until the evening, and Dick was glad. He had no desire to answer all the questions which Forsyth would ask, although he had one arrow ready sharpened for the complacent Sergeant. Here were

men from the Barren Grounds with their fierce little Eskimo teams pulling sleds piled with musk-ox and caribou-skins. Here was a hollow-cheeked Indian with his mangy mongrels staggering under the weight of a half-filled little sled of wolverine and mink and fox. A French-Canadian flogged his big-footed, long-legged Mackenzie hounds past at a gallop; halted them with many screams and French curses, and sprang in among them with his dog-whip as the loafing pack of huskies, mongrels and malemutes fell on them in that close, grim welcome which means all the blood and death their masters will allow.

Dick watched the man in the midst of them with appreciative interest. He had all the spring and the verve and the diabolical absence of fear which belongs to the best class of trapper, and his rakish clothes, his earrings, and the gay trappings of his sled proclaimed him as one of the dandies of the North. He freed his team at last; unharnessed them, and let them go back to their battle.

"Que voulez-vous!" he said, shrugging his shoulders as he caught Dick's eye. "They will have it."

"There are more than the giddés will have it at times, eh?" said Dick.

"Dame," said the Frenchman, and laughed with his black eyes snapping. "It is a true word, that."

Outside the Store a team of Labrador dogs lay in the lines. They were motionless; but the prick of their ears and the occasional snarl baring the white teeth told their nature. Death was the one foe to whom the dogs of the Labrador consented to strike their flag. The office at the end of the Store was packed with men. The approaches to the sheds were a tangle of emptying sleds and quarrelling dogs; of Indians and breeds and Frenchmen, and an occasional whiter-skinned man of the South. Dick passed them by to the tepees already rising like a little forest along the outskirts. For many of the trappers yearly take their families to the woods and the home of those families is wherever the tepee rises.

It was here that Dick hoped to glean some information concerning Andree. If she had gone to Chipewyan with the Indians she had possibly gone to the woods with them too. He did not believe that she would come back to Chipewyan. The cunning of the forest was in her as it was in himself. But he might get a clue. He lifted the flap of the first tepee and looked in. It was dark after the glare of the sun, and a strong smell of musk from the musk-robes pervaded it. Something chuckled out of the dark as a child chuckles over the thing it plays with; and Dick went on his knee as his eyesight cleared and looked into the sunny eyes of a white baby rolling on the musk-ox robes. She was two years old, perhaps, and

she snatched at his face with round dimpled hands, cooing and kicking her feet in delight. Indian rags were wrapped round her, and her yellow hair was cut across the forehead, Indian-fashion. Then the tepee-entrance was darkened by the broad bulk of an old breed woman, and Dick sat back on his heels and asked questions.

"Aha!" said the old breed. "She belong to Alphonse Michu. Him wife die and him go to the trapping and take the baby. I have her sometimes. And the other women they do have her sometimes. She quite pretty baby."

"Is Alphonse Michu here?"

The old breed nodded, and Dick went out, strangely moved. From something such as this had Grange's Andree come, and well enough he knew what it had made of her. He remembered Tempest's talk at Churchill about the responsibilities of the white man; but it was not that alone which sent him in search of Alphonse Michu. A great and overwhelming pity for helpless childhood and girlhood possessed him for the first time in his life, and he acted in obedience to it.

But he could not do anything at all with Alphonse Michu. The French Canadian loved his baby passionately, and perhaps, in his superstitious heart, he regarded her as a fetish. Dick's determined efforts brought the anger into his voice and his long pale face. But they could do no more, and he left the man with a prayer in his heart.

"The Lord send she doesn't turn out as pretty as Grange's Andree," he said.

On the slope to the barracks he overtook a breed with a husky team which hauled a heavily-laden sled. He stopped with that intuition which never failed him where faces and names were concerned.

"Why, Tommy Joseph," he said. "What are you taking your catch to the barracks for?"

"Wolves," said Tommy Joseph, raising his gaunt face for a moment. Dick glanced from the lean, dark man to the huskies where the blood of their wolf-progenitors still ran savagely. And he felt the same untamed pulse-throb in Tommy Joseph.

"Well, you ought to know all about 'em," he said. "And you've had good luck, I see. We're paying twenty dollars a pelt this year."

Tommy Joseph glanced up with quick fire in his eyes. "There is no good luck and no bad luck. It is fate," he said in French; and Dick suddenly remembered the story of Florestine.

"Well, perhaps you're right. Tommy, have you seen Grange's Andree lately? She came up to Chipewyan last fall."

"Laissez," said Tommy sharply, and kicked at his fidgeting dogs. "Was it Andree? Certainement. I did see her last in Grey Wolf. It is two years since."

He proceeded to fill his pipe with an indifference which proved his words lies to Dick. But Dick never showed his hand. He gave Tommy good-bye amiably and went to Forsyth. Forsyth had seen Andree; and, what was more unlikely, he remembered the circumstance perfectly and described it with much detail.

"That bunch went on towards the Rocher," he ended. "Rafting along the Slave to Resolution, I guess. I didn't take much stock of 'em."

Forsyth never took much stock of anything. Dick nodded. "All right. I'll try to make Resolution before the ice goes out. Might as well be hung up there as anywhere else," he said.

Dick stood long at his window that night, looking over the Lake, where through nearly three hundred years, had plied the little canoe-patrol between old Chipewyan and Montreal. A grim, lonely patrol, put through by those wild-hearted men, gay-eyed and daring, quick in murder, in love and laughter. They called to their descendant, those pioneers with their silken sashes and their slender, strong wrists whence the ruffles had been ripped away when Prince Rupert's gentlemen girded themselves for that first fight with Canada. They called across the treading years which had blotted out so much of romance, so much of horror, so much of gallant endurance, so much of gladness and passionate grief. And for long Dick listened, with fire smouldering in his eyes and his breath coming fast through his thin nostrils.

In the tepee camp arose suddenly the deep baying of hounds; the sharp yelps and strong-throated snarls which told where the still lawless spirits of the North gave battle. Shrill French screams and curses cut as suddenly into the noise, mingled with the hissing of the long caribou-whips. The roar died to a mutter of growling; to silence, and Dick went to bed, remembering the words of the breed-dandy, "They will have it," and half-envious of the giddés because he knew that within the hour they would have it again.

He crossed the Lake next morning with little Jack Lowndes' kisses on his lips; and still something of the hot vigour of those long-dead men possessing him. And this mood held with him merrily through the daily danger that threatened him. For the Chinook blew, day after day; and hour after hour the ice moaned and creaked, surrendering to its persistence. A policeman outside the barracks at Smith's Landing waved a hand to him as he swung past one evening, for he could travel now only in the frosty hours.

"Good luck to your hunting," he shouted; and then he too was gone, and only the soft sputtering of the mush ice on the runners broke the silence of the world.

All Dick's will was bent on reaching Fort Resolution before his hold-up came, and he did it, with the threat ever on his heels and the first great cannon-like reports and thundering groans of the bursting heavy mass to keep him awake on the second night after he reached the Lake.

It was from Resolution that the real tracking of Andree would begin. So far there had been the one road only for her; but on the Great Slave Lake there were so many trails, and he might have to draw a half-dozen covers before he marked her down. There was the Fullerton trail which he and Tempest had taken, with its medley of intersecting lakes. There was the trail direct north to the Great Bear Lake where long-dead Hudson Bay posts hold yet glamouring traditions of bullet-riddled palisades, and mahogany furniture; of the grim kings of the Company and the dare-devil men with bright handkerchiefs bound round their brows. There was the Coppermine River trail to the Dismal Lakes on the rim of the Arctic Ocean, or there was the great Mackenzie route to the Yukon and to Herschel Island. Dick weighed the chances of each with all cunning and knowledge. He believed that Andree would go down the Mackenzie; for, wild creature of the forest though she was, she had never loved loneliness nor the Indians. Her ways had lain among the white men, and her vanity and love of excitement would keep them there. The ice was breaking on the Great Slave Lake when Dick reached it, and in a little while the birch canoes shot across the long blue run of it. Dick was to do much paddling there before he came upon the trail of Grange's Andree. He was to know well the mouse-grey evenings when the sea-birds and loons flew low, calling stridently. He was to see the prairies yellow as the snow passed and the pale feathers of birch and poplar blow against the indigo of the fir-forests. He was to seek the camp of many a breed and Indian along the shores, remembering past history, and making, in his dull khaki and his untiring determination, his small indelible share of the new.

Very familiar now were the names of those long-dead forts which Sir John Franklin had set up all across this wild land. Enterprise, Reliance, Providence, Confidence, Good Hope and Resolution. The courage of the bluff old sailor and his strong-hearted men rang in the words yet; beacon-lights for the men who come after them.

One night the smell of a spruce camp-fire called him into a bight where the thick trees came to the water-lip. A score of trappers lay round the fire with the fierce resinous glow of it in their faces, and Dick saw there that look of deep content

which belongs only to the people of the North in their own stamping-grounds. He went ashore, and stayed the night there. And when he paddled back to Resolution he knew that Grange's Andree was flying from what he was bringing her to the great silence of the Mackenzie River.

Next day he packed his kit and followed her. He followed while the brief summer glowed to the full and faded; while the anemones and fragile snow-flowers gave place to fireweed that glowed in all the glory of a Scotch heather hill. Tall mauve asters swayed by the banks, and the shining ranks of the golden-rod lit up the hillsides where the black crows flapped low and heavily and the wild bird calls thrilled, thin and far, through the dry tang of the pine-forests. At Fort Simpson the barley in the Mission fields was swelling with the milk in it, and all the potatoes were in flower. Dick stayed here some days; seeing the Sisters of Charity working in the garden-patches, and questioning the many breeds and Indians who drift through the post from the Liard River and across to Lac la Marte. Here the Hudson Bay Store stood in the strongly-palisaded enclosure which had been common to all of old, and the hot sun warmed its weather-beaten flanks and struck colour from rock and sweeping prairie. Then the excitement of separating two drunken Hare Indians one night took him to the Hudson Bay factor with a question.

"Well, you know what it is," said the factor, and laughed. "Men will drink something. They make this abominable stuff themselves of hops and yeast and dried fruit and sugar. The smell nearly kills a chap dead. But it serves its purpose. You might let Macpherson know about it."

Dick assented. Two little detachments patrolled the whole of this Mackenzie River district as best they might, and they would infallibly bring the weight of law into Simpson some day before long.

The old stars were dying down the sky behind him now, and new ones rode in an unfamiliar sky. Already there was a riot of coloured leaves on the wild-rose bushes and the tall, slight saskatoons, and down by-ways the pea-vines were taking colour and fireweed leaves blazed red and orange. Near Fort Norman he met a canoe with a constable and a Hare Indian, paddling upstream with the sun in their eyes. Dick gave a greeting, and the Constable swung alongside.

"Come and tiffin with me," he said. "It's about time." And on the bank of the Mackenzie the two ate badly-cooked damper and tinned beans and freshly-caught fish with more appetite than they once had eaten in London hotels.

The Constable used the speech of Eton and Oxford, and he had never learnt his drill at Regina. But all his hard-bitten, genial face showed contentment, and Dick recognised him as

one of those throw-backs to the restless days which bred Raleigh and Drake and so many more. He had caught his man near Fort Macpherson, and two thousand miles of lonely country and a desperate furtive Indian stood between him and civilisation. But he said good-bye to Dick with a hearty grip and laughing eyes.

"Good fortune to you," he said. "At what end of the earth will we meet next?"

At little Fort Norman in the Great Bear Lake district there was no word of Andree. Dick did not expect it, and he turned from the English Mission house to his long, silent trail again with certainty growing in him. Andree was seeking the white life. If she had wanted to hide among the Indians she would not have come so far north as this. The creatures of the wild were all about him as he made his night-camps now. The short-necked moose thumping down on their knees to nibble grass in the open places; black bear snuffing down the hole of rabbit or musquash; wolves howling on some edge of forest at the moon; marten, wolverine; fierce, tuft-eared lynx. He saw the spores of all and heard their cries. At the occasional Indian camps among the white birches and the deep spruces he went ashore, struggling in the little Chipewyan that he knew to make interpretation to these Slave and Dog Rib Tribes.

Where the big Mission churches and schools, the trading-posts and log-houses of Fort Good Hope stood above its tall ramparts of clay banks Dick sought the Hudson Bay factor. He slept that night between lavender-scented sheets with the memory of Grieg, played well by the factor's wife, in his ears. There had been silver on the table, too, and cut glass, and the rim of the Arctic Circle was fourteen miles away. Dick left Good Hope reluctantly. The two hundred odd miles separating him from the next post promised so much of that solitude which he was daily finding more terrible.

There was frost in the red mornings and the yellow evenings when he reached Arctic Red River; and on the little lagoons, where the duck were gathering to take flight, ice crisped sometimes as he drove his canoe in among the reeds to shoot mallard or merganser for his supper. The days were shortening rapidly; but wild-flowers still bloomed among the grasses when he left the Mackenzie and turned up the Peel River to Fort Macpherson. Two days before he had found a drowned Indian caught in a snag and had towed him ashore and buried him. For a moment he had stood by the shallow grave scooped in the sand and stared down on the dead face before he covered it with an aching desire to know what was the use of it all; of all the short, sharp days of man's life that pass so swiftly; of all the long eternities of nothingness that come after.

His first evening at Macpherson gave him more comfort than he had known for many days. In Corporal Hensham's little warm private room, with the big black stove-pipe running through it, he smoked pipe after pipe among the pictures on the walls and the well-worn books on the shelves. Dumb-bells and Indian clubs filled the corners, for Hensham was an athletic and enthusiastic Canadian, with all the energy of youth in him yet.

"I'm off on a mountain patrol the end of the week," he said; "but I can take you out to the Fishing Lakes to-morrow, and you'll likely get some information there. The Indians are thick around it, getting their fish out before the ice. They are principally Loucheux; a very decent lot, and I can let you have an interpreter. What's the girl like? Nearly white, you say."

Dick reached a sheet of brown wrapping paper from under the table, and picked up a bit of chalk which Hensham had been using, to keep a quoit-tally with.

"I'll try to give you some idea," he said; and rapidly roughed in the tall, breezy outline, the curve of the cheek and chin, and the carriage of the small curly head. It moved him more than he cared to allow as Grange's Andree sprang into life under his hand, and he tossed the sheet across to Hensham in sudden irritation.

"That is an amateur attempt," he said dryly. "Her Maker has done the thing rather better."

"Oh, I say!" Hensham was startled. "Why; she's a beauty. And you're a don at this kind of thing all right. You'll let me have it for my gallery, won't you? Thanks. Seems a brutal thing to have to corral a girl like that. You must have known her pretty well, too."

"I have seen her several times. You have a young Grahame here, haven't you? I came down as far as Chipewyan with him two years ago."

"Oh, I say. Didn't you hear about that? We were all awfully cut up. He got lost last winter. Hunting a Loucheux who'd deserted his family, you know. And there was a blizzard, and—well, it was starvation, I guess, unless the wolves got him first. We came across his bones in the spring. They were stripped clean. There were a few lines in his pocket-book—they hadn't touched that. "I've done my best," he said, and I guess he cashed in over trying to get down something about "Tell somebody something." We couldn't read that. I sent his dunnage out by the steamer for the Commissioner to forward back to his people. He came of good stock, you know. I've seen the photographs of his folk and his home in Scotland."

Dick remembered how sure he had been of the baronet

father; and he guessed that the pocket-book would go into the family shrine along with perhaps a rusty claymore worn at Flodden, or a sword broken under Montrose.

"Did he ever shoot a bear?" he asked suddenly.

"Why—was it Grahame or—yes, he did. The first winter he was here."

Dick's lips curved on his pipe-stem into a smile. He had not forgotten the lad's eager words on the Athabaska, and somehow he felt curiously pleased that young Grahame had shot his bear.

Hensham had a couple of gaily-ornamented birch canoes ready at day-break, with a Loucheux Indian of pronounced Japanese type squatted in the stern of each.

"We go up the Peel," he explained. "Then a little river lets us right into the Fishing Lakes. Jelly and Good Boy will get us up in no time. Smells good, this morning, doesn't it?"

The air was still and vital with the frost. Across the foot-hills and the white flanks of the Rockies sunlight dazzled; drawing sharp scents from distant clumps of aspen and tamarac and willow, all mixed with the pungent odours of spruce. In the swampy places over the river, and along the uplands duck were calling and wild geese clanging in their haste to be gone, and Dick's foot broke a stray yellow dandelion from its stem as he sprang into the canoe. Hensham pointed his cane at it.

"Look," he said. "In August, and a hundred miles within the Arctic Circle as the crow flies. What would English people think of that?"

"I've found wild-flowers in July two-fifty miles further on."

"At Herschel?" Hensham looked at him quickly. "You've been there, then? Why—I guess—you're the man who picked that Yankee absconder out of his own whaler there about five years ago."

"Six. It is a great solace to some of us to find we can win fame so easily."

"I imagine it wasn't easily. You can't treat a Yank like anyone else. He mostly has his own opinions. These canoes are pretty decent, aren't they? The Indians won't use anything but birch bark. Our hardwood's good enough, too. Baskerville—he's H.B. factor here—he has a pair of birch bark snow-shoes over a hundred years old. Right and left spread of frame, you know. I want them the worst way, but he won't part for any money."

It was good to hear Hensham talk after the long silences filled with thoughts that hurt. And it was good to paddle smoothly with the strong stern-thrust to help, past banks of spruce and willow and scented Balm of Gilead where the

coloured leaves dropped into the water. The frost had killed out the last flies and mosquitoes; but Henshaw remembered them feelingly.

"An absolutely devilish pest they are," he said. "How did you get on?"

"Kept out in the stream all day, and made smudges at night. They were nothing to what I've known on the Hudson Bay side."

"Tell me about it. What's the hunting like there? We have the jumping deer here, you know. They're fine sport. And moose, of course, and sometimes musk-ox. But there's nothing much better than the jumping deer among the foothills. Grahame was crazy about them. Said they beat the Scotch deer-forests hollow."

Dick had no time for thought until they came in the darkening evening of the short fall day to the Fishing Lakes, raising the Indian camp-fires one by one as they swung round the loops of the river.

"Smell the fish?" said Hensham. "They don't leave things to the imagination any, do they? What say? Oh, well; they do get a few greyling and loche and others. But it's mostly white fish, of course. Jelly"—he turned to the Loucheux behind him—"drive in there where the camp seems biggest. They're sure to have some chiefs among them. And you go right ahead and ask what you want to know, Heriot. Jelly will put you through. And you can trust 'em as far as you can size 'em up. They're decent fellows. Never have any trouble with them. Christians, too. They all carry around Bibles in their own language."

"Do you call that a recommendation," said Dick, amused; and he stepped out, looking round him with all the keen delight of his artist blood.

Through the colourless evening the big camp-fires blazed strongly; shooting their light among the little dingy tepees and the spreading spruces and across the clearing to the lip of the grey low lake. In the clearings stood great scaffoldings of birch poles, gridironed over the top. In dark, half-seen knots by the lake stooped the Indian women, splitting the fish, and running a sharp-pointed stick through the tails, one after the other. Presently a shapeless figure detached herself from the bulk; crossed the bars of light that pricked out for a moment the high-cheeked copper-yellow face and the black stiff hair; crossed to a scaffold, and hung her armful of sticks in a row along the gridiron. Then noiselessly she turned and went back to her work.

The men had done their share when they drew the last nets to land an hour ago. They smoked now, lounging round the fires, and sucking the fish-bones of their supper. Through

signs and Jelly's assistance Dick extracted information from several, and then Hensham came back from a heated conversation down by the Lake.

"The women have got to clean up all that before the frost gets into it," he remarked. "It'll be stiff as ramrods by morning. They've made a record haul, and that old sinner wants to charge me more than fifty cents a stick for the fish I'm getting from him. But he's not going to cut any ice off me. He won't let me have half what I want, either."

"They can't carry more than a certain amount themselves."

"Why—they don't go far for their hunting, you know. They cache a lot here and come back for it. Anyhow, they can punch holes in the ice and get some more if they're pushed. Got any news yet?"

"No. They're hunting up an Esquimaux who came up with fur from Herschel, and didn't go back with the others."

"Oh! Well, I wish you luck. Here he is. My word; they're pretty good chunks of fat, aren't they?"

The stocky broad-nosed little man could speak a little English. Dick possessed a few Esquimaux words and a very great deal of intuition, and in a little while he knew on which stage he was to play his first grim act with Grange's Andree. She had gone to the Arctic Ocean; down the mighty Mackenzie River where its many mouths open to salt water, and the Esquimaux pass in their kyaks and build their snow igloes.

"Now, what in the nation could have taken her there?" said Hensham.

"Whalers," said Dick briefly, and for a little while he would not speak again.

The Esquimaux had passed her in a birch canoe with an Indian behind her. But Dick knew that she would stay with neither Indian nor Esquimaux. If she had gone aboard a whaler which happened to winter this year at Herschel there was no escape for her. But if that whaler, Yankee, or Russian, or Norwegian, manned by English or the daring sailor-men of Labrador; if that whaler went home through those smoking seas of winter, Dick's chase had only just begun, and Grange's Andree might draw him at her heels for a year yet.

This knowledge roused in him again that hunting instinct which was seldom dulled for long. Sudden savage desire to run his quarry down rose above his pity and reluctance. He knocked his pipe out and stood up with a long breath.

"That is sure, then," he said. "And I must get into Herschel before the ice. Can you get me a breed to pilot me through the Mackenzie mouths, Hensham? Those currents are always changing."

"Why, certainly." A note in his voice brought Hensham to look at him curiously. "You're not wanting to start

right away to-night, are you ?" He laughed. "Leave it a day or two, anyway. By the way, I sent Anderson down with the mail after the boat came in. You'll meet him, and he can likely give you some information."

"Ah! Perhaps he can."

Dick fell silent, looking round on the amber and scarlet and the cold black of the night where the dark figures moved. The quiet, busy women brought that strange sense of home-life to this wild nature which no camp of men ever brings. Dick had noticed this very often before, and the fact struck him again, forcibly. A quiver of pain passed across his face before he turned to answer Hensham's next question. For he was remembering Jennifer sewing on the deck of the river-steamer down the Athabaska.

CHAPTER XX.

"YOU MEAN TO DO IT?"

ACROSS the bare rock of Herschel Island in the Arctic Ocean the wind from the Pole blew a gale. For to the whalers Herschel was known familiarly as "the blow-hole," and through all the storm-bitten twelve miles of it neither tree nor shrub dared raise its head, though the long grasses waved over it in the summer and the wild-flowers bloomed.

In the little settlement of white men and Esquimaux which crouched on the sand-spit round Pauline Cove every door was barred and every window made taut against the blast roaring down over the shoulder of the low hill behind. Out in the land-locked bay—the safest harbour all along the Coast——the riding-lights of four of the whaling-fleet swayed and shuddered, driven hard against their moorings, and three short miles away the black humps of the mainland mountains showed fitfully as the Northern Lights flickered up and fell back.

The low, strong log-and-skin huts of the Kogmollock tribe of Esquimaux on the island were dark blots only, like tortoises asleep. The store-houses of the whaling-companies were dark, and in the half-dozen log huts used by occasional officers of the whaling ships when they chose to live ashore, no life showed. Except for the riding-lights in the Bay and the glow from the windows of the Royal North-West Mounted Police Barracks, Herschel Island might well have been a dead thing, accursed and lonely between the frozen Pole and the naked shore. But the life-light of the daring men burned bright there; of the whalers who follow their strike by berg and floe through the teeth of the harsh salt wind and the smoky spume that it brings, and of the Police of Canada, who plant their flag some four thousand miles north of its birth-place and sit down under it to dispense the law of God and of men with all the wit they may.

Dick turned from the window in Baxter's small private room and came back to warm his hands at the stove where the driftwood shone umber and sky-blue and salty purple. He had been at the Island a fortnight, and he had learned some of

the things which he had come for. And his knowledge kept him awake at nights because, for the present, it condemned him to inertia. With Selkirk, one of the two constables under Baxter at the detachment, he had made a long and exhaustive trip east among the Esquimaux on Baillie Island and beyond it, and there he had heard a few stray facts about Grange's Andree. Two Esquimaux of the Nunatalmute tribe—the bold and honest hunters and trappers of the mainland—had brought her across Mackenzie Bay, and there she had joined a family party going east in one of the great deep-sea umiaks wherein the Esquimaux make their long voyages. Dick had come back to Herschel in disgust.

"She must have started just about the time the whalers went out," he said. "Were there any going back to San Francisco this year, and would they have taken her aboard supposing they were?"

Baxter considered.

"There's the 'Aïda,' Captain Ormundsen. He's got his wife with him, and he was going out if he took whales. He had bad luck last year. And the 'Skagway' didn't intend winterin' again. Closely was master of her and a bad lot. He'd take Andree just to give us trouble. The 'Fanny' reckoned to go out, but she's back. Got no whales, and her master persuaded the men to try another season. They're losin' money, an' they'll keep on losin' it, I guess. Likely some of 'em will desert this winter, an' we'll have to hunt 'em. And then there's the 'Rocket.' She aimed to go out; but I guess Jack Scott'll bring her back. He's a Yank, and he'll stick at it till he has to hammer his way home through ice. If Andree went aboard the 'Rocket' there'll be rows. I remember her in Grey Wolf before your time. She had all the place by the ears then. A wild young devil she was, always. That's the only four as wintered here last year."

"Ah! And if Andree has gone out on any of those boats I've got half a continent to cover before I can get at her."

"Sure. And you likely haven't got her then."

Dick's laugh was curt. The fight in him was strongly roused by now, and he had small mercy left for Grange's Andree.

"A chap wrote su'thin' about 'There's never a law of God or man runs north of Fifty-three,'" said Baxter. "I guess we have got 'em both up here at Sixty-nine. An' if anyone's wantin' them at Eighty, which is the Pole itself, ain't it, why—we'll bring 'em there right away. I reckon our jurisdiction runs that high anyhow. A feller can't get on the far side of British law in these parts."

Baxter's patrol reached some two hundred and fifty miles south, and as many hundreds east as he could go. Alaskan

territory touched it on the west; but he had no objection to including all the northern latitude there was. Dick smiled. This unemotional sanguine temperament was exactly the stuff needed for Herschel.

"What have you done with yourself these two years, Baxter?" he asked.

"Why—I reckon they ain't been so long as I thought. There are the patrols up to Macpherson and around to Kittigazuit, and I went a cruise on the 'Janet' last year, after whales. Saw a lot o' country and Esquimaux that were new, and got a lot o' new localities fixed in my head. I've been mapping them out in case they're ever wanted. We were over a hundred miles north of the magnetic pole that time, and I tell you right here that the discipline a good master can keep on a whaler isn't far short o' that on a man-o'-war. Then there's the shootin' in spring. Brayne and I had a solid week this year, and I guess we could have got thousands o' duck an' crane an' geese if we'd wanted. There's all the wood to haul from the mainland, for we can't get enough coal in by steamer. An' there are the customs to collect from the whalers, an' rows to kick up if they're caught givin' drink to the natives, or doin' any else that they shouldn't. An' once in a while we have a prisoner, though the Esquimaux don't give much trouble. There was the whaleboat I bought from off the Karnac last year, too. We stove her in on a rock, an' she took a lot o' tinkerin' to patch. An'—oh, well, I guess we keep busy, one way an' another."

Dick nodded. Baxter had had the wisdom to count the centre of the world from where his own feet stood instead of from some three or four thousand miles to the southward. That stolid nature of his brought its own compensation. Two years of Herschel Island would have driven Dick insane.

"But you won't be sorry to be going out in the summer?" he asked.

"Why—I guess not." Baxter jerked his thumb at a photograph on the wall near the stove. "*That's* what's waitin' for me outside," he said.

Dick looked at the photograph with lazy interest. It showed a homely face of about average intelligence and amiability. But Baxter's voice was deep with an immense pride and reverence.

"Ah!" he said. "I shouldn't leave her too long, Sergeant, or you'll find some other fellow has run off with her."

"Not much." Baxter accepted the compliment with abashed delight. "Why, she says——" he thrust his hand into his tunic, drew it away again, and grinned all over his kindly weather-beaten face. "She'll wait," he said. "I'm not afraid o' losing my Miralma. Why, she writes every week,

though she knows I only get mail twice a year. An' I writes lots to her. I tell her all the things I'm thinking about—and I do a lot o' thinking up here. Brayne and Selkirk, they're young fellows, an' they like riotin' around. I like thinkin'."

"What do you think about?" asked Dick curiously.

"Oh, everything. Whales, now. They live a thousand years, and they mate once only, for keeps."

"Dear me." Dick's half-closed eyes flickered open. "I'm afraid you couldn't teach man such constancy. He is civilised."

"Sometimes," said Baxter, ponderously. "I get to wonderin' if civilisation is all it's cracked up to be."

"Do you? Why, it has taught us how to evade the harm we do instead of getting caught every time."

"An' I don't know as that's a very good thing, either."

"Ah!" Dick's lids flickered again. "You are not a sophist, Sergeant."

"Why—I guess I'm not exactly certain what that is."

"Pray your gods you never may be. Have you any gods, though?"

"Well—I reckon I've been wonderin' that too. My Miralma says I've got to have hers. An' I don't know. Likely I have when I come to think of it. A man does a lot of thinkin' up here, an' she's maybe right. Wonderful what a woman can do wi' a man, now. I get to thinkin' that, too."

Dick glanced again at the woman on the wall. With that face and that name anything might be expected of Baxter's Miralma—anything except teaching a hard-bitten old campaigner like Baxter to get down on his stiff knees before her beliefs.

"It is wonderful," he assented. "But they can corral us with other things besides religion, you know."

"If you think as she ever tried to get me——"

"No, no. I'm sure it was mutual attraction. Like to like. I was thinking more of myself than of you just then."

Baxter grunted, contemplating the strong easy body flung back in the big chair that was made from a cut-down whale-oil barrel. Dick looked very well and vigorous. The hard work and the open air had given him the last hall-mark of health, and if his indifference and cynicism were less carefully veiled than in earlier days Baxter was not the man to notice it.

Baxter stuffed some more wood into the stove, and shrugged his shoulders as the wind bellowed at the windows.

"Any whaler tryin' to get in to-night'll have to watch out," he said. "Was Selkirk bakin' when you were in the kitchen?"

"He was. And Brayne was splicing a shovel-handle. They're a handy pair."

"They have to be. Do you know what else I've been

thinkin' ? What my Miralma calls God is not mighty unlike what I call conscience."

" Really ? Not the conscience you have to live with all the year round ? "

" Why, now ; I guess it's got to be. Conscience is a kind o' standard we got to measure up to whether we like it or not. I learned at school—an' it stuck, someway—that the first Edward of England made the yard-measure the length o' his own arm. And it stayed put at that. Well, the measure o' right is the standard o' Miralma's God's arm, I reckon. And that stays put. We can't monkey any over measurin' cloth. That's a set standard. It don't change because we want a bit o' give an' take sometimes. It stays *put*. And we can't monkey any with the standard of our conscience. A man knows right enough what he's got to measure up against. He's got the whole three feet of it inside of him."

" And supposing he has—what then ? "

" Why—why ; any ordinary decent man don't generally go doing what he knows he hadn't ought to do."

" How old are you, Baxter ? "

" Forty-two, sir."

Occasionally Baxter forgot the rank which man makes in presence of the rank which birth makes. Dick looked at him through half-shut eyes.

" Seven years older than I am," he said, slowly. " You're a lucky man, Sergeant."

Baxter's eyes went back to the plain-faced woman on the wall.

" My ! I reckon I know that," he said softly.

Dick sprang up impatiently, and went over to the window, staring out on the pale wild night where the lights fluttered. Even in the sheltered bay the sea heaved in great masses like ebony, and the wind brought the steady boom of its crashing on the outer rocks. A speck of light like a firefly showed once beyond the harbour mouth, showed again, and Dick spoke.

" Here's Jack Scott walking the 'Rocket' home, Baxter."

" What ? " Baxter came hurriedly to his elbow. " Why, it is a boat, sure enough. And I guess it's Scott. There ain't too many men would try to make that passage to-night. Eh ? She's a five-forty-ton steamer, twin propeller, is the 'Rocket,' and maybe she'll get in, and maybe she won't. If she catches one of those big seas on her she'll go down like a nail under a punch. But she likely had to come. The ice'd be chasing her off the grounds, and Scott won't fool around doing nothing."

Dick gave no answer. He was watching that light which flared skyward and sank and struggled up again like the fluctuating pulse of a sick man. It represented forty or more human

lives, and one of those lives might be Grange's Andree. That thought quickened the desire for capture in him, and quickened his imagination also. Suppose Andree were aboard, how would she meet him? Once he had seen her afraid, and he did not want to see that again. He could not think of Andree as crying piteously for mercy. He would not think of it. Rather on this night of wild storm and flying spray could he think of her breasting it; laughing, with her curls blown out and her long coat wrapped round her. There were the same reckless elements in her as in himself. She would defy him; or she would fling herself on him in her all-forgetting love. But she would not cry to him for mercy. He dared not think of that.

He watched the light die and leap up again and pitch sideways with almost the intensity of belief that it was Andree herself battling her wild, lonely way out there against the storm. Baxter spoke again.

"I reckon it is the 'Rocket,' safe enough. See her clear that point? He's a cast-iron sailor, is Scott, and he'll bring her in straight as a bullet with destruction all around him. There's not another man in the fleet would dare it on a night like this. My! She's coming."

"Can I go aboard her with you in the morning, Sergeant?"

"Eh? Why—were you thinkin' he might have Andree? It's one chance in a hundred, Heriot."

"More than that. If she went out intending to board a boat she'd do it. And there'd not be more than three or four that didn't mean to winter. There is a good chance that she's on the 'Rocket.'"

"Well; it's possible. Anything is possible in this world, I guess. But I won't have you along, Heriot. Maybe I can get her ashore friendly-like. That would be better than doin' the thing in public, I reckon."

Dick glanced round. Such refinement in regard to Grange's Andree rather amused him.

"It would be the first time Andree ever objected to publicity," he said. "And you won't get her ashore, Sergeant. She'll guess you've something up your sleeve. If she's there, I must go as soon as you come back, for fear she gets off in some way."

Baxter nodded, and in silence the two watched the 'Rocket' beat near and nearer until she came to anchor at last, riding heavily against the white foam along the harbour jaws.

Then Dick went to bed. But he did not sleep well. A dozen times he woke to hear the thunder of the wind and the gurgling snores of Baxter in the other bed across the room. Once Selkirk came out of the room opposite and tried the front door where it shuddered and groaned under the smite of the wind, and many times he expected the storm-window

to be driven in. Mingled with his uneasy dreams were the faces he knew best. Jennifer, now laughing, now crying, now turning from him. Tempest, stern and aloof, unbending even in his grave self-renunciation. Andree, warm-lipped and glowing with her love, reaching eager hands to him. He woke once with the strange breathless sensation of a kiss stinging his mouth and the blood galloping along his veins. Then he lay still, staring on the darkness, and thinking his bitter thoughts. Jennifer had sent him away. Tempest would not accept his friendship any more. These two whom he loved had chosen to be nothing to him. It was only Andree who held him before pride or conscience or anything else. Only Andree who was ready to fling all she had and was into his hands if he would have taken it. And he had been cruel to her, mercilessly cruel. But her love had been a greater thing than that.

And then with a sudden stab came the thought: Was her love for him still the chief thing in her life? A chill of dread ran along his body to think that perhaps it was not. In the cold dark of midnight, when a man's will lies weakest, Dick knew that it would be real pain to know that Andree had ceased to love him. He was heart-sick with desire for Jennifer and for Tempest, and they had denied him what he wanted. They had been too cold, too pure for him; and in a savage revulsion of feeling the whole of him cried out for something which cared for him, for his own self, past all laws and creeds and scruples and calculations; something which would love him whether he were good or evil, whether he were cruel or kind; something which just gave, demanding none of those self-torturing struggles from him.

This mood held him doggedly through the next morning, when the grey bay tossed restlessly under the clear sky and Baxter went out in the whaleboat with Selkirk and a couple of Esquimaux to the 'Rocket.' Dick helped Brayne wash up and fill the stoves with wood. Then he put on the close-sewn fur coat bought from an old Kogmollock woman and went down to the shore.

The smite of the wind tingled his blood at once and reddened his eyes. He opened his chest to it, walking fast, and glancing round him with those keen eyes which missed so little.

Outside their low banked-up huts a few Esquimaux were moving with the fur-lined head-covering thrown back from their coarse black hair, tonsured like a monk's, and their good-natured flat greasy faces. They had gone into their winter clothes since he saw them last evening, for their outer coats had the long hair blowing in the wind. On the inner suit the hair was turned next the skin. In the store of the Pacific Steam Whaling Navigation Company some hands off one of the whalers were bringing out beams and joists and

planed timber for the roofing-in of their vessel. Dick stopped a little while to watch them. Hard-sinewed men, the most of them; with their loose clothes flapping, and their untamed faces ruddy, and their bright eyes with that far-seeing wildness in them as though they listened still to the call of their lover the sea. They spoke little and sullenly, and he guessed them to be from the 'Fanny'; foremast hands who had "signed on bone," and who, because there were no whales and consequently no bone, were going deeper in debt to the schooner every day. Dick remembered Baxter's suspicion that some of them would try to desert. And, looking at them, he believed it.

In the harbour the boats still rocked and groaned at their hawsers with the tug of the after-swell. The 'Rocket' drew deeper than any other there; but she, like the rest, was bluff and broad of beam and flat of keel, so that the ice might lift her and not crush her in its mighty grip. Naked and mournful they looked with their bare poles stabbing the sky and their sheets singing in the wind. The white shaving of smoke from the 'Rocket's' stack showed that she had not chosen her winter quarters yet, and as Dick watched her, Baxter's boat dropped away from her side and drove shoreward with the men swinging low to the oars. Dick went down to the very lip of the water and looked. There was no woman in the boat. But that told nothing. It was not Baxter who was to take Grange's Andree from her stronghold.

The boat swung near, dipping deep in the restless swell. Baxter stepped out, answering the question in Dick's eyes.

"She's there," he said briefly. Then he took Dick a few steps aside. "She's there," he said again, and his voice was uneven. "Heriot, you never told me she'd turned out the lovely thing she is. I remember her thin and brown, and even then—Well, she's got them all crazy for her, of course. And they can't do anything with her, not a man of 'em. She goes around with a knife in her belt, and they dassent touch her. Have it into them like light, she would, and they know it. My! And that makes them the crazier. She is a beauty, and this is a bitter cruel thing you've got to do, Heriot. A bitter cruel thing."

Dick smiled a little. He knew so well that wild animal indifference and temper and defiance in Andree. And she carried a knife, did she? Would she try to use it on him, or would she come to him as before, with her hands out and the gladness in her eyes?

"Jack Scott's clean off his head," said Baxter. "He wanted to take her out the worst way, but the ice caught him. I'll go along with you now, Heriot, for she'll be a handful of herself if she don't want to come, and I wouldn't answer for

Scott the way he is. You've got your warrant, supposin' he wants to see it? It's his ship, you know. Well—get in. Push her off, Selkirk; we're goin' out to the 'Rocket' again."

"Does he know she's wanted?"

"No. You'll have to tell him that. Poor devil. I guess he's sorry as he ever took her aboard. She's makin' him sweat for it. Aye; she's makin' him sweat for it. You watch out, Dick. One can raise out most fellows on a bluff, but a man in love is the devil to meddle with."

Dick knew this for a certainty when he peered in at the cabin door over Baxter's shoulder, and saw Scott with his elbows on the table, and his eyes on Andree where she sat on the transom under the port-hole. In the light of the deck he had stumbled among half-scraped bone, barrels and trying-out pots, flenching-knives and tubs of blubber. Here, in the gloom, the two men and the one girl at the table showed palely. And then Andree thrust her face forward at Baxter.

"You needn't have come back. I will not go ashore for any man," she cried.

"Won't you come for me, Andree?" said Dick, and stepped out of the dark. Andree sprang up with eyes dilated and colour suddenly struck from her cheeks. Dick heard the men move, but his eyes did not leave Andree. Did she know what he had come for? Did she know?

"Dick!" she screamed sharply. "Dick!"

She put her foot on the transom and hurled herself across the table; tripping and stumbling among the cups and cutlery; laughing and crying in a breath.

Dick caught her reaching arms and lifted her down, holding her still.

"Steady," he said. "Steady, Andree."

But his own voice was not steady. Not at this moment could he forget what she, in her utter abandon, had come to him for.

Scott was round the end of the table now, with his square face distorted by passion.

"Take your hands off her," he said, thickly. "Take them off, will you?"

The light in Andree's eyes had blurred Baxter's for a moment. He wondered if Dick had known of this. He touched Scott on the shoulder.

"Be careful," he said quietly. "Don't you see his uniform?"

Dick had stooped his head down to Andree.

"Do you know what I've come for, Andree?" he asked.

"Oh, oui;" Andree shrugged her shoulders impatiently. "I suppose. Mais—I knew it would be you to find me. And it was you!"

She laughed in that light-hearted spirit which never let her see beyond the moment. And then Scott thrust Baxter aside. The intended blow had not reached him. He was swept beyond everything but his love and jealousy, and he put his hand on Andree's arm.

"Let her be," he said coldly. "She's my passenger aboard my ship, and I won't have her interfered with. Get away out of here. I'm an American citizen, and I don't care a cold cent for you or your uniform or that damned law of yours behind it! Get off my ship. Get away out of here!"

Dick half-turned, swinging Andree swiftly behind him.

"Leave him to me, Sergeant," he said; and Baxter understood. For many reasons—reasons which were beyond those which Baxter knew—this was Dick's business only.

Scott's face was dead-white and his eyes were wild. He tried to pass Dick, but the policeman's solid bulk and superior height blocked him.

"What are you here for?" he shouted. "What do you want—you!"

"Would you like to know?" The smile on Dick's lips tightened. "Look at this then. No—you won't touch it."

Scott glanced over the warrant. He gave a deep groan, like a man struck in the chest, and he staggered as though he had been struck.

"You—you can't mean to do that?" he faltered. "You can't mean to do that?"

"Possibly my uniform and my law mean more than a cold cent to me," suggested Dick, and Scott looked straight at him.

"You devil!" he said.

The set smile was on Dick's face still. Keeling, the mate, came forward.

"What's he giving you, Cap'n?" he asked.

The question roused Scott again.

"Why didn't she tell me!" he cried. "Andree, Andree; why didn't you tell me! I'd have taken you out if I'd lost half my catch over it. Ah—Andree!"

Again he tried to pass Dick, and could not. Keeling leaned back against the table with his hands in his pockets.

"Murder?" he asked of Baxter with uplifted brows. Baxter nodded, and Keeling laughed a little harsh laugh.

"Stewed in your own gravy, Cap'n," he said. "You wouldn't let me touch her, and now you've lost her yourself."

Dick looked at him with interest.

"I wish it was you I had to deal with, my man," he murmured. "Captain Scott, I apologise for my intrusion, but I have my duty to perform. I must remove the prisoner at once."

Scott straightened up and his white, rigid face was dangerous.

"We are two men to two," he said. "I don't care what uniform you wear, or what warrant you carry. You shall not have her. I'll call the whole ship out before I let you take her."

"I don't think that the gentleman behind you intends to endanger his life in a quarrel of this sort. You had better be wise, Captain Scott. There are always more where we come from, you know."

Scott glanced at Keeling and glanced away again. It was as Dick had said. The odds were three to one.

"Will you fight me for her," he asked.

"I wish I could," said Dick sincerely. "You're a straight man, sir, and I'd be happy to oblige you. But it is against my orders, and you can only get yourself arrested if you interfere."

"You mean to take her—for this?"

"Yes."

"Does she know it?"

"Yes."

"But she——" He was silent a moment, thinking. Then he sprang straight at Dick. "She loves you," he cried. "She loves you, you blackguard, and you can do this to her!"

Dick met him as promptly, and the two men grappled. It was a short struggle, but a very sharp one. For though Dick was the taller and the heavier, Scott had courage and plenty of science. But it was the tumult of his own heart that played the traitor with him, and in a little he reeled back, clutching at the table with both hands, and shaking and giddy with the uneven breaths he drew. Keeling had watched with sullen pleasure in his eyes. He had more than one grudge against Scott. And Andree had watched in unabashed delight. She always gloried to see men flung off their balance for her, and she always rejoiced to see men fight. Scott found his breath at last.

"You—mean to do it?" he gasped.

Dick pulled his tunic down and settled his belt.

"I do not change my mind, Captain Scott," he said.

"I am not a soft man," said Scott slowly. "But——" He lifted himself, fastening his eyes on Dick. "You speak of your duty," he said. "Your duty! A man's duty is to protect a woman, and not to hunt her down for death. I can't keep her. I can't fight the three of you. And I'll let *you* take her if she has to go because it will bring you worse luck than anything you've ever done in all your life. You'll never see Heaven, but maybe we'll meet in Hell and figure out the end of this. Let me speak to her."

Dick moved aside, and Scott held his hand out to Andree.

"Good-bye," he said. "I'd have saved you if you'd told me. Did you think you'd have shocked me? My girl, I love you the better for your pluck. Tell me that you never hated me, Andree."

Andree's cheeks were bright and her eyes dancing. She veiled them a moment with her long lashes, and looked up with the half-shy swiftness which had been fatal to so many before Scott's day.

"Mais non," she whispered. "I did like you. But I like Dick more better."

"You know what he is taking you for?"

Andree pulled her hand from Scott's, and slid it into Dick's.

"He is Dick," she said simply.

Scott looked keenly into the other man's face. Then he swung on his heel.

"Take her," he said. "I'd rather be Andree than yourself, and so would you. But you've got to be yourself, and I guess that's going to give you all you want before you're through."

He passed into his cabin, shut the door, and locked it. Dick and Baxter took Andree back to the barracks. But, an hour later, when Andree sat in Baxter's little room, mending a net and singing her soft French songs over it, Baxter saw Dick climbing the little slope that led up to the wind-swept plateau beyond. It was dark when he came back, and the cool indifference of his manner was unchanged. But Baxter knew.

"That fellow is goin' to be tried-out—hard—before he's done wi' Grange's Andree," he told himself.

Day by day the long fierce billows of the Arctic bowed their old grey-bearded heads lower before the march of the ice. Day by day Dick fretted to be gone, and waited for the snow, and helped Baxter in his round of duties, and looked after Andree. She obeyed Dick implicitly, with a frank delight. But she was a torment to the other men, and Baxter said no more than he felt when he one night expressed a belief that Andree would probably knife Selkirk directly as she had done Ogilvie.

"Did she tell you she'd killed Ogilvie?" said Dick sharply.

"Sure. Last night. He cheeked her, she said, an' she wasn't goin' to stand it. Wonderful what she takes from you." He raised himself, looking keenly at Dick. "If one could give a chap a warnin'," he began.

"One can't." Dick's tone was final. "Selkirk tells me we'll all be on half-rations directly. Is that so?"

"Why—there are four boats in that didn't mean to winter. We'll have all we want of fish and seal-meat, o' course, but we're

going to suffer in the groceries. And I've got to keep a reserve, you know. The kiddies would peter out in a week if we fed them with oil and meat only. They've got too accustomed to flour and sugar and tea now."

"I'm afraid I'll have to beg enough to carry me to Macpherson. I fancy we should get off in a couple of days, now. Yes. I'll be glad. Damned glad. I want to be doing something."

He went out with a restlessness which he rarely showed, and followed Andree down to Ek-ki-do's igloo, where she went daily to play with the children. It was not needful to put Andree under restraint. Her love for him was the chain which bound her fast, and he knew it. He had had reason to know it more acutely than ever during these past weeks.

Outside an earth-and-timber shaft Dick dropped on his knees, and crawled painfully through an odorous darkness into a tiny room where he could not stand upright and across to a larger one where Andree rolled with a couple of Kogmollock babies among the deerskin robes on the little platform which ran round the walls. The very dim light came through a piece of transparent yellow seal-bladder stretched across a gap in the roof, and the whole place was hot and extremely rank with oil and fish-smells. But Andree was laughing in merry peals of joy among the babies, while the little fat mother sat on the floor, stitching neatly at a deer-skin tunic.

"Hallo, Andree," said Dick, and stood up as Andree tumbled the chuckling bundles aside and pushed her curls back.

"Dick," she cried. "It is that I will have a deer-skin suit, moi. Je ne peux to mush in a skirt, and I will not. I will have a parka and all else—comme ça. Like to Mrs. Ek-ki-do. And we will have the seal-skin boots, my Dick, and I will chew them pour vous when that they do get too hard."

"You will what?"

"Chew them." Andree pointed to Mrs. Ek-ki-do. "She does chew her husband's boots tous les jours—all round the sole—to keep them soft. And my teeth are all so good as hers."

"I know. You bit me once. I will see about the clothes, Andree, because I have been thinking that we will need something of the kind. And I will chew my own boots if it's necessary, thank you. But I fancy it won't be. It is time to come back to barracks, Andree."

"But kiss this bèbè the once. She is so dear," said Andree, and lifted the black-eyed, broad-faced little bundle with her strong young grace.

Dick's eyes contracted. Among children Grange's Andree was at her very sweetest—until she tired of them.

"Like a Japanese doll, isn't she?" he said. "Or one of Moosta's babies."

"Ah!" cried Andree in sharp passion. "Do not say to me of Moosta's babies."

She was out of the igloo and across the beach before Dick could follow her, and in the barrack-kitchen he found her quarrelling heatedly with Brayne. But that incident in Mrs. Ek-ki-do's igloo haunted him for some days. For many years he had tried to teach himself Nietszche's new commandment, "Be hard;" but, because of the irrationalism which he recognised, his strength there was always likely to be shaken at the unexpected call on it.

Ten days later came Dick's last night at Herschel, and he felt a curious and uneasy reluctance at leaving it. All the afternoon he had been on the wind-swept plateau with Brayne and Selkirk, sawing out the great blocks of ice from the fresh-water lake for storage in the ice-house until summer came, and his last sight of the dead white Polar sea from it had brought him down shivering with more than cold. For the first time he had a distinct dread of this long journey which was surely likely to be no worse than many which he had taken before.

By the stove in Baxter's little room Andree was putting floats on a small net with which she intended to catch fish in the Mackenzie. She sang as she worked, and her face was lit with anticipation. Dick knew that on himself only, the product of a refined civilisation, lay the horrors of that anticipation. Andree never attempted to realise a thing until she came to it, and seldom then. She would never have run from justice if the breed who had brought her word of something Ducane had once said had not urged it, for she had quite forgotten the fear which possessed her at the time of the trial. She forgot quickly as an animal does, and far more completely, because her eager ignorant mind always flung itself fully on the next new thing. This long mush through the half-dark of an Arctic winter, with only Dick beside her for the most part, would be something new and strange and altogether delightful.

"Bec-a-bec; et toi, et moi,"

she hummed. Then she glanced up.

"Je me sers votre couteau, Dick," she cried. "You no mind? Très bien. I did myself cut with it, too. Do you know what make happen to me with Maktuk this afternoon when we go to shoot seals round the blow-hole? It was so much cold, and the parka collar would not keep up round my face. And Maktuk he did make spit on the two sides and

hold them togezzer. Dieu ! They freeze like one dans un moment. And they had to hold me the fire over to melt me when I come back. I did laugh."

Baxter laughed also, going on with his careful setting-out of native births, deaths, and marriages ; his tabulation of the tonnage, names of officers, and of boats in the Bay ; his details of patrols, of the few white men hunting or prospecting along the Arctic, and of the state of health and contentment of the settlement. All these data were to go south with Dick, and also a little package of letters and native carvings for Baxter's Miralma.

" I guess they know a thing or two," he said. " And I guess reports are a mighty different thing to what they must ha' been at Herschel before the missionaries and us came along. Drinkin', an' all sorts o' rows with the whalers, an' no law or religion anywhere at all. And now those Kogmollocks hold their services among themselves regular, and every boat's crew has to be aboard by ten o'clock, and no drinkin' allowed. This sort o' thing's a satisfaction to a man, I reckon."

" Exactly. And so is the knowledge that we ultimately convert the heathen by killing them out. There are about one hundred and twenty Kogmollocks now, aren't there ? And much the same of Nunatalmutes ? A few years ago there were four hundred Kogmollocks. Oh, we will convert them all right, Baxter, for that is the way in which we conquer our territories. We can't do much with the Arctic when we get it all to ourselves without a native left to it. But we will get it. That is the glory of Empire. And we can't do without Empire."

" But it is better for them to be converted——" began Baxter vaguely.

" Indubitably. Perhaps the Esquimaux consider measles and whooping cough rather drastic missionaries. But that is not our fault. We do our best. We have always said so. What time does Selkirk expect to start in the morning."

Selkirk was taking the police dog-team up to Fort Macpherson for supplies, if any could be spared from there ; and Dick, with his long strong sled and specially-picked line of huskies, expected to keep pace with him so far. For he was an expert musher, and Andree was unusually strong for a girl.

" D'rectly after breakfast. You ought to make Macpherson in ten or eleven sleeps, I guess. Likely you'll put in a day or two there ? "

" Not longer than necessary to get loaded up again—unless Andree happens to be fagged at all."

He broke off, and both men looked at Grange's Andree where she sat on the Polar bear rug with the fire from the

open stove dancing on her warm oval cheeks and her slender, busy hands.

"Dans les prisons des Nantes,"

she sang, and Baxter's eyes caught Dick's for a moment. Then he went back to his work with his hard, wooden face reddening with pity.

And the pity was not altogether, nor even in chief, for Andree.

CHAPTER XXI.

"THIS PSYCHOLOGICAL ADVENTURE."

THE thin-gnawed rind of a red sun showed just above the horizon in the South. It lifted little higher in these days of mid-winter, and the strange pallor of a long night full of the silky swishing and the colourless gleam of the Northern Lights possessed the world for all but three hours daily.

Andree stopped in the trail and turned to look at that red curve before it dropped again. She could look straight into it without blinking, and Dick watched her as she stood, drawn to her full height, with the hood pushed back from her face. The world was colourless, motionless, soundless. In a little while their breath would begin to crackle with the frost as it had done last night. Just now the two, heated through a long march without a pause, were glad to stand a moment to take breath again.

In the lines the huskies leaned forward, ears pricked and tongues dripping. To the south a yellow snow-cloud banked up towards the zenith. Against the wide sweep of snow Andree's tall young figure stood lithe and vigorous, instinct with life. But her face was sad: sadder than Dick had seen it since he came to her in the cabin of the "Rocket."

"What is it, Andree?" he said, and she moved instantly, smiling at him.

"I did wonder—this place where there is no life and no light—is this what it will be like to be dead, Dick?"

He came very close to her and took her hand.

"Do you often think of that, Andree?" he asked.

"Non. Oh, non. I cannot think all the to-morrows. They are too many. But—it seemed so, perhaps."

"Forget about it;" he patted her hand gently. "The sun will come again to-morrow, you know. And we will see it more every day as we go south."

"But it is not the sun I did know. And these are not the same stars, Dick."

"I know. But we will get back to them again."

"Oh, oui," she said. And then she looked at Selkirk and the fat Esquimaux boy swinging ahead round the bend in the river. "It is to-night that we make arrive to Fort Macpherson?" she asked.

"To-night. Unless you stand here too long. Are you tired, Andree? You are such a splendid musher that I sometimes forget you're only a girl."

"I am not tired." She looked at him gravely, with that last red light on her face. "I do not know what it is, parceque je suis très content. I did not think ever in my life to have you near me for so long time, Dick. What you want to put your hand up that way for?"

"You are so very pretty that I think I am afraid of your blinding me, Andree."

The joy shone over her face suddenly. Her eyes sparkled, and she laughed, putting her hands up against his neck.

"Ma foi!" she cried. "I am glad. Now I do forget that ever I hated you. I want to be so pretty always when you do look at me, Dick."

"Don't! Take your hands down! I have told you before not to touch me!"

She let him go instantly.

"Eh, bien," she said, with a little sigh, and Dick looked at her, frowning.

"Why are you always obedient to me and not to the others?" he said.

"Why—if I am good perhaps one day you will love me and kiss me again—if I am good," she said.

In that fast-fading light he took her face between his hands, turning it up to him.

"You have broken very many men in your time," he said. "Do you want to break me, too, Grange's Andree?"

"I want you to kiss me again," she said simply.

"And can't you understand that if I did—No. I can't kiss you any more. And I can't wait here any more or we'll freeze. Come on. It will be late now before we get to the Fort."

The sun went down, and through the long pale dusk which is not like any light anywhere else they swung forward with the sturdy little huskies trotting strongly. The smell of far-off snow was in the air, damping the ringing chill of the frost. The pallid width of the river seemed rimless, and ahead vague ghostly shadows danced and ran as the Lights overhead flickered up and sank back. And then, on the naked bank of the Peel, came the red glow of the lights of Fort Macpherson.

Hensham prided himself on his even temper, but he was upset that night.

"It's a—a devilish thing that you've got to do, Heriot,"

he said. " 'Pon my soul, I don't know how you have the heart to—stand up to it."

From the big chair by Hensham's stove Dick looked up in amused mockery.

" Why ? " he asked.

" Why ? " Hensham exploded. " Lord, man ; she's lovely. And that way she has of——"

" I see. Sin is only sin in the old and ugly. Therefore Guinevere didn't sin. Helen didn't sin. Judith didn't sin. Salome—perhaps we may grant a little license to Salome. She did as her mother told her. But I see your drift——"

" I don't know what you mean," began Hensham, reddening.

" No ? But I know what you mean. We don't interpret the person through the sin, you see. We are too apt to interpret the sin through the person. That is one of the fundamental faults in what someone describes as ' this psychological adventure called man.' We let Romance run away with us. Because a woman is pretty she can't be wicked."

" You know I don't mean that. But this isn't quite the same thing——"

" The particular case never is. And every case is the particular case, isn't it, Hensham ? "

" Good Lord," said Hensham, walking through the room, heatedly. " Haven't you a heart in your body at all, man ? "

" That is my own private business, isn't it ? "

" The deuce knows." Hensham looked at him gloomily, " I doubt if any one thing on earth is a man's private business only."

" It is until he is weak enough to show that he possesses that thing," said Dick ; and a little later, in his own room, he said it again, with a laugh of contempt at himself. For he had been using these arguments on himself very often of late, and he knew the value of them.

Two mornings after Andree came to the door of his room and talked to him as he twisted and knotted the thongs of his outer moccasins. She was all ready for the continuance of the journey, and animation sparkled in her as she chattered, taking no heed of his curt replies. At last she ran to him, sliding her arms about him as he stooped.

" I do love you," she whispered. " Dick, Dick ; je t'aime. Ah ! Je t'aime."

His hands ceased their work. He did not move.

" You know how cruel I am being to you, Andree," he said.

" Bien ! C'est toi. If you do make it so—still it is you," she said.

He was silent for a moment. Then he lifted her off and stood upright, looking out straight before him.

"What is it?" she asked. Then she touched him, half-frightened. "Dick? Is it that you are seeck?"

"No." He looked at her sharply, and then looked away again. "No. I was just deciding something, Andree."

"And is it now made sure?" she asked.

He looked at her again, speaking slowly.

"Yes," he said. "It is now made sure."

Hensham himself went with them to the edge of the winter portage into Arctic Red River.

"You'll do it easily in the day," he said. "Only thirty-five miles, and the trail tramped already. You certainly have a first-class team, too."

His friendliness seemed forced, and he was in haste to be gone. Dick watched him swing over the snow-hummocks that hid the little naked houses of the Fort, and then he turned to Andree with a smile.

"You must follow me very closely and not talk at all for a while," he said. "For we are going round past Macpherson again, and on to the winter trail to Dawson, Andree."

"Why?" she asked, half-startled.

"Because I can't take you to Fort Saskatchewan," he said, in sudden passion. "I can't do it. I cannot 'make it so.' No man could with your face near him. I will get you through the Yukon somehow, and bury myself at the same time."

"But one cannot be bury while one is live."

"Oh, yes, one can. Plenty of men are buried while they are alive. What are you looking like that for?"

"I do not like you with that talk in your voice," she said.

He drew her to him and kissed her.

"Is that better? Now—mush, Andree. Quick. I must get out of sight of Macpherson as soon as possible."

He winced as he said the words. They drove his position home to him so sharply. For the rest of his life now he would have to get out of sight of all things which represented law and order as soon as possible.

Keeping in the shelter of the little rough snow-hummocks and the sparse vegetation they crossed the Peel; passed the barracks again, and struck on to the Peel Portage which led by wild and rugged mountain ways into the Yukon. Dick knew the entrance of the Portage only, and the later trail not at all. But he had a good map and a compass, and it was almost certain that he could pick up an Indian as guide later on, even if he should lose the trail, which was not likely. He had a genius for finding his way, and there were reasons now why he should not make any mistakes. He had plenty of provisions, and he and Andree were in perfect health.

Therefore, there was no danger to be feared except from the barracks. He smiled grimly as he swung along, breaking trail with a heavy lurching step. Hensham might talk windily enough; but he was not the man to fling away reputation and position to do this thing which Dick was now doing. But there was no pride in Dick that he was doing it. He went on with face set and strong, lunging steps, making his stops short and infrequent. He knew that he dared not stop. He dared not think. And yet, despite himself, that keen, unflagging brain of his would think.

He believed that he had faced this matter fully enough in the last two months. Now he knew, as every man knows, that until the future becomes the present, he had not realised what it meant to him. The fire of Andree's words and her beauty maddened his hot blood, and he knew that it would do so again. And he knew that the chill of common-sense would continue to thrust in between, congealing that hot blood as it was doing now. What was it that he meant to do? Why did he mean to do it? Andree would never understand; never realise. She swung after him as unconcernedly now as she had done all the way up from Herschel. Life meant no more to her than the day. Death meant no more. It was a vague thing which she would not think of; which she could not think of because all greatness had no meaning for her. She was stupid, utterly and entirely stupid, and he knew it. And those mocking words which he had said to Hensham about her beauty were true, and he knew that also.

Without that inconsequent alluring wild-wood bloom of her no man would ever have looked twice at Grange's Andree. He would not. If Andree had been like Moosta to look at he would not be doing this now. Life had hardened him too much through the work which he had had to do for ordinary pity to obscure his judgment.

What was controlling him now? It was not pity. It was not love. It was not a sense of justice. It was just that lawless call of the will-o'-the-wisp again. It was the old breakdown. That it would not be for more than the moment he knew well. There was neither rule nor convention in this world would ever bind Grange's Andree. And he would not keep her with him and guard her. He knew himself too well to think that. And if he let her go what was there for her then? Tempest had said: "I hold you responsible for her till the end of time." Tempest had said: "Death will be easier for her than life." If Tempest who loved her had chosen so for her; if the natural law of punishment for crime had chosen so for her, by what right did he interfere?

He tramped on, breaking trail grimly, with the dull dusk falling, and the snow drifting on his shoulders.

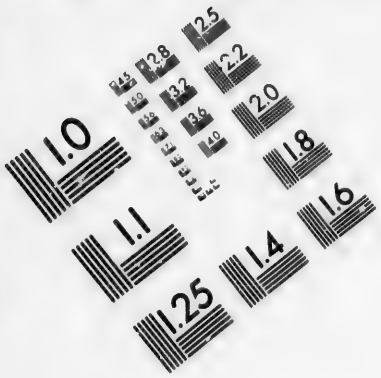
He did not notice the snow. He was seeing into his heart with that piercing self-knowledge which seldom failed him, although he as seldom walked by its light. He had never had anything but contempt for the man who dared not face the sting in order to snatch the honey of life. He had known keenly what he meant to give up for Jennifer. But the whole of his mind and body was eager and resolved to do it. He was giving these things up now for Grange's Andree. He was wrecking his life for no great all-conquering passion; no sense of justice; no honest unselfishness. He was doing it because he was weak; because there was nothing in the core of him which could stand against idle temptation.

The snow thickened. It hung on his eyelashes, half-blinding him. The trail was growing more hilly and rough, and night was closing in with a bleak wind. But not once in the short halts which he made did he speak to the girl behind him. She did not mind. That kiss had filled up her world for her again, and she would have trod after him beside the dogs until weariness forced her to her knees. She wanted nothing but the sight of those broad, straight-held shoulders and the memory of that kiss on her mouth.

Where a few snow-heavy pines made a thicker blurr close at hand Dick stopped with a jerk, suddenly realising the world around him again.

"We must camp here, Andree," he said shortly, and began to break the branches, knocking the snow out of them, and kicking it aside from the earth. He spoke little that night, and repulsed all Andree's overtures. And long after Andree had curled herself in her deerskin robes at the back of the tent Dick sat with his back against the sled and watched the smoky fire and thought.

His work seemed hateful to him now. The past in which he had loved Jennifer and Tempest seemed hateful. He wanted to cut himself free from it as he had done with other pasts. Against the whirling snow Tempest's face shaped itself, with the square strong forehead and the sword of justice in his eyes. He laughed at it. Through his effort to help Tempest this tangle had come around his feet. Who was Tempest to interfere with him now? And if Jennifer had loved and trusted him as Andree did he would not be here. Who was she to interfere with him now? Then he suddenly realised that she did not interfere. She seemed very far-off and dim. The sound of her voice, the personality of her, the very features of her face eluded him when, with a start of half-alarm, he tried to fix them in his mind as clearly as they had always lived there. At each effort they evaded him more completely. He knew how common such lapses of memory are. He knew that the strain of his mind and the weariness of his body were



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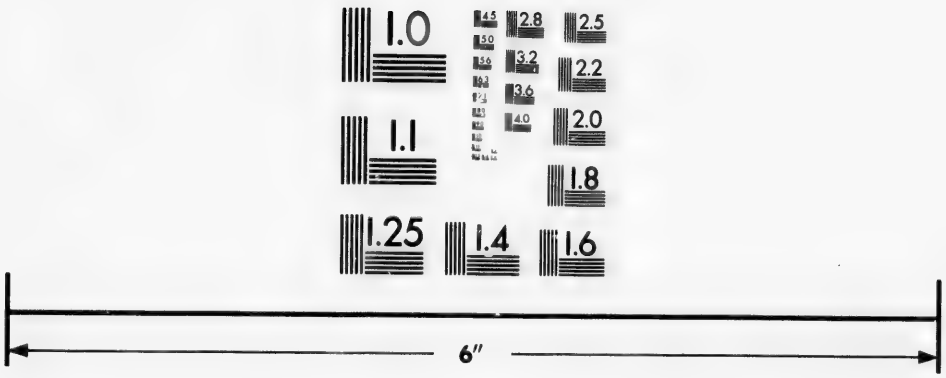

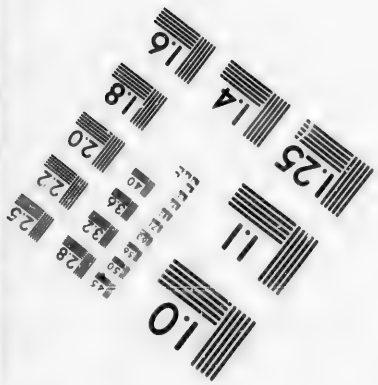

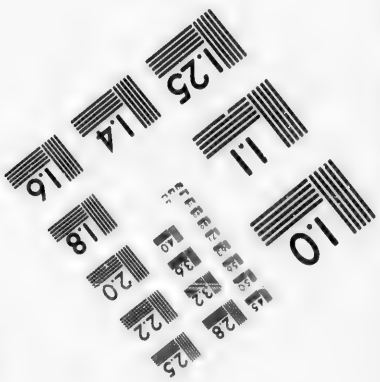

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partly accountable. And yet, with that elusive superstition which moves more or less in every man's blood, he felt that it was a final thing. He had denied and defied her, and she had left him.

He got up, walking out of the tent to take the snow on his face. The huskies, curled nose to tail, glanced up, bright-eyed. But he did not see them.

"Jennifer!" he cried, and the word fell dead without meaning. "Jennifer!" he said again. And then he stood still with hands clenched up.

Ever since he had left her he had fought the hold which she had on him. He had cursed it and defied it, mad with himself because he loved her still. And now she had gone. She had gone. His tired, half-dizzy brain fumbled with the thought. He flung his hands out. "By God," he said. "I have got to go back to you again. I have got to go back to you, Jennifer!"

In the yellow morning the snow still fell. The trail by which they had come would be half obliterated already. But it would never be obliterated in his mind. There was feverish haste in him now to turn back. And then, as he came from the tent, Andree met him, brilliant-eyed and brilliant-cheeked.

"Ah, Dick. I did dream you were away," she cried, and flung her arms close round his neck. "I do love you. I do love you," she whispered. For a moment Dick stood still, with eyes set and face white. Then he freed himself, stepping back with a little smile.

"I wonder what you would think if you knew what it is that you love, Grange's Andree," he said. "Supposing that you could ever think or ever know—or ever love, perhaps. And I wonder what you will say when I tell you that we must go back to Fort Saskatchewan after all."

She went red, then white. His repulse had roused her temper, and fury and terror swept her like the wind on a harp.

"I will not," she screamed. "I will not. You can make me keel, but I will not."

He moved past her and began to kick up the tent-pegs.

"Get your things together," he said. "And be quick."

"I will not," she screamed again.

He made no answer. He struck the tent, rolled it, and stowed the cooking-box and the shovel and axe on the sled. The snow blew in his face, and the trail would be lessening each moment, and in this heavy storm he could see no landmarks. Andree stood with her blue hands clenched up, and the snow wet on her face. Then she hurled herself down full-length, sobbing, and beating the snow into spray about her. Dick left his work and went to her, recognising grimly that just retribution had caught him very soon. But it was long

before he could get her on her feet, because he would not employ the only method which she wanted. Wisdom told him to stay in camp until the storm broke. Irritated temper told him that he could not sit still for twenty or thirty hours with Andree. He got away at last, with Andree beside the sled. She snapped at him like a husky when he spoke to her, and he went to the lead in silence. Among the pines and the rough spurs the winding trail was difficult to follow. Drifts blocked it; and the wind which he had kept on his left cheek began to blow in whirlwinds round them, and the trail was gone. But he would not believe that he could lose himself on this comparatively easy piece of track, and until the dogs were too weary to go further he plodded on in the deepening snow, making camp at last almost, as he guessed, within sight of Macpherson.

Utter exhaustion and sullen anger kept them both silent that night, and Dick slept like a log, waking sometimes in the dim half-light which was all the day gave now. For, though south from Herschel by more than two hundred miles, they were still well within the Arctic Circle, and at Herschel the sun would have ceased to lift above the horizon at all. The dark snow-shadow was lessened by the strong bitter wind that tore through it; and Dick went out, swaying against the blast, and drawing his furs tight round him, to take his bearings. In the unearthly pallor everything looked unnatural. But to Dick it was worse than that. It was unfamiliar. These hooded shapes round him were higher ranges than he had passed; the deep ravine on his left was new; that endless misty slope up which he had probably come in last night's storm was not on the Macpherson trail. At some sharp bend in the trail he had overshot it, and he would have to work back and forth over the ground until he found it. This did not lighten the anger which had gone to bed with him, and he called Andree roughly; and, receiving no answer, strode into the tent, jerking away her pile of deerskin robes.

They were cold and empty, and he went out hurriedly, shouting her name incessantly. The rugged mountain-flanks and snow-swathed distances flung it back at him insolently, and in the following silence terror seized on him. Andree had run away from him; run in her fury or her grief straight into those eternal huge solitudes where she would be no more than a bird blown out to sea on a windy night. He looked round for her snow-shoe tracks, found them where the storm whirled up the powdery snow, fed the dogs and himself, struck camp and prepared to follow her. Had he been certain of his own position he would have gone on to Macpherson for help. But as matters stood he dared not waste time. He believed that she would not go far. The loneliness would soon

call her back to him, and in his wrath he knew that he would want to strike her when she came.

With the bleak wind buffeting him and his face cut by the sandy snow-particles he followed up to a bare scarp that launched itself against the sky. She had gone further than he expected. Then, on the snow-wreathed rim of it, he flung himself back with a sharp gasp. Grange's Andree had indeed gone further than he expected. The smudged snow and broken twigs on the edge of the scarp attested it. Dick was unnerved for a moment only. Then he climbed a spruce that lifted near by, hacking off the branches with all the force which he dared put into the brittle steel. He left it at last, a two-winged lobstick, such as the Indians use, and turned, seeking a way down the hill-flank. From below that landmark would give his position. It was not likely that Andree would be killed by the fall into soft snow. But it was possible that she might be smothered, and it was very certain that she would be starved if he did not find her in time.

It was on the second evening that he forced his way through a narrow, snow-choked gut into that ravine where Andree had fallen. The storm raged still, and it was more than likely that he would not get out by the way he had come; and when, along the ravine-bottom, he saw something flutter, like a leaf in the wind, he stood still, grasping his whip and taking long breaths through his nostrils. If Andree had come to him then he would have beaten her; but it was an hour before his shouts and chasing brought her to him, reeling like a drunken man, and with wolfish eyes, and high cheekbones showing. Silently he put food into her hands, watching her tear it and swallow it savagely. Once she looked up, saw his face, and looked away again. Then she jerked off her snow-shoe.

"Broke," she said, and handed it to him.

He spliced it with a tough twig of hemlock, called up the dogs, and turned back the way he had come. He took less notice of her than if she had been a dog, and she followed him; trembling, yet defiant; shaken with her grief and her misery. At the gut he stopped. There was no way out there any more. For a few minutes he stood, staring round on the steep rock-walls misty in the drifting snow. Then he said:

"Are you hurt anywhere, Andree?"

"Non," she said with quivering lips.

"Can you keep on walking?"

"Oui."

A little longer he stood, looking round him. Then, with a half-sigh, as though he knew the chance of that choice, he left the gap and went down the ravine.

Dick knew little of mountain-work; and in these fierce storms, and this deep snow which hid the lie of the rivers, the

little he knew was worthless. By his compass he worked east when ravines or broken ledges of rock or impassable mountains permitted it. But day by day he grew to know that want of food was going to call the time before the east he looked for was won. Through the days that swelled to a week, to a fortnight, he took no notice of Andree. His own bitter anger and despair blackened the world for him beyond all pity and mercy.

Other men had disgraced the uniform they wore. Other men had been privately branded among their fellows. Dick had had no pity for them. Now men would have no pity for him. Whether his body were found or not, he would be recognised as a traitor and a deserter. He had no business off the Mackenzie route, and no man could get lost on the Mackenzie. If he had left that trail he had left it for some ill-doing, and all men would know it. All men would be ready to blacken his name—the name of the brilliant lone-patrol man who had thrown away his honour and the honour of the Force for an Indian girl. All men would know. And they would laugh. Andree, plodding silent behind him, wondered vaguely at his look and tone when he had to speak to her. But it was not until the night when he killed the first dog that she broke down.

"Dick," she cried. "Dick. I make sorry. Oh—I sorry. Dick—love me."

He turned from the kettle where he boiled the meat. The dogs slunk round him, licking their lips after their unholy meal, and he looked gaunt and cruel and lean as they.

"You have no need to be sorry," he said. "You may find it an easier death than the other. And you have revenged yourself on me."

"But I do not understand. Oh, Dick, be kind to me or I will make die."

"You surely understand that we are both going to die in any case. It can make no difference whether I am kind to you or not."

He brought her the food, and she took it in silence. She was afraid of him, but not of anything else. Life had come to mean to her nothing but a stumbling on behind that swinging figure as it had come to mean to Dick nothing but a horror of the disgraced name which he must leave behind him. The wind beat her, or the sun dazzled, or the frost scarred her skin; and always the weight of the snow drew at her knees until one day it drew her down into it and she lay still. Dick was shaking her when she came back to understanding again, and she believed that his eyes were softer. But it might have been that her dulled senses made them seem so.

"It would have been kinder to leave you there, Grange's

Andree," he said. " But I have never been kind to you, have I ? "

" Peut-être one day you be kind again," she said, and fell into step once more.

That day came when only two dogs hauled the sled which held little more than the kettle, the deer-skin robes, and the raw hides which Dick gave the famished animals to chew on at a halt. It was the Indian in Andree which had kept her up so long. But the more volatile French blood was failing. It gave way at last when, on a gentle slope by a thick clump of firs, her courage failed, and she slid down in the snow.

Something which he did not understand made Dick turn. Then he went back to her, dropping the harness with which he helped the dogs to pull. She looked up at him—gladly, as he thought.

" No more, Dick," she said. " No more."

He gathered her in his arms and carried her into the comparative warmth of the spreading firs. Here he made camp ; lighting a large fire, and wrapping her in the deer robes.

" Mais—j'ai froid," she whispered ; and he drew her close into his arms beside the fire, although there was little heat in his starved body to strengthen hers. She smiled slightly, with her eyes shut, and he looked down on her unflinchingly.

The men who had loved her would not have recognised Grange's Andree now. Hunger and privation had done their work. The dog's meat had caused sores to break out on the skin of both, and their lips were cracked deeply, and their skin peeling in places. But on the girl's face was a content that did not show in the man's. Dick remembered that portfolio full of Andree's glowing youth, and for the moment he felt glad. They would live long after the trail had taken both painter and painted. In his arms Andree stirred, looking up with those wide eyes that had lost their coquetry at last.

" It makes so dark," she whispered.

" It will soon be light for you, Andree," His words broke with a sudden jar of amaze and anger. That was Jennifer's creed ; never his. He had no belief in anything beyond this life which he and Andree had sold so dearly.

" I cannot rest." She spoke in French, stirring fretfully. " I am so tired, and I cannot rest." She plucked at the folds of the deerskin. " That's it," she said, and for a moment her voice was stronger. " Take it away, Dick. It is too much the wild life. It is the deer that run and run and never be tired. It will not let me go. It is too live. Take it off, Dick."

Dick obeyed. He understood how the wild nature in her was having its last struggle. She smiled, feeling his arms closer round her.

"That better," she murmured. "I do love you, Dick."

"I know, Andree," he said, very low.

For a long while she lay silent. The cold was freezing into Dick, numbing his brain and tingling along his limbs. The virility in him rebelled against it, and he heard his voice speaking sharply.

"I won't die," it said. "By God! I won't die."

Then he saw that Andree was looking at him wistfully. He understood, and he stooped his head, and kissed her twice and again.

"Ah!" she said, with a long sigh of happiness. One shiver ran through her; her still face twitched once. And presently he rose and wrapped her again in the deerskin which would trouble her wild heart no more.

Beside the fire he stood still, blowing on his numbed fingers and holding them to the fitful blaze. And between the heavy boles of the firs he saw a shadow pass. The blood rushed to his temples, blinding his eyes. Was it help at last? The shadow passed again. It seemed vaguely familiar. What was that connection in his brain between the night of death on which he had first heard the name of Grange's Andree and this hour when he had seen her for the last time? It was a threat of some kind—and then he remembered that big Irishman who had died on the Moon-Dance. O'Hara had promised to come back to the man who spoke ill of Grange's Andree, and he was keeping his word.

Dick stood still, pressing his hands over his eyes. The part of his brain which was still clear understood that this fantasy was born of that nerve-connection and of the weakness of his body only. But he did not know how long he was going to believe that. In a sudden spasm of terror he dropped his hand to the revolver in his belt. But he did not pull it out. All his life he had denounced that way out of trouble as cowardice. He had betrayed and broken and destroyed enough. He would not let go that last hold on manhood while any power in him could help it.

But ever after that day he went on with O'Hara stalking him.

The mercilessness of this great Northland which he had served so long became a tangible thing to him now. He had been her lover through many golden moonlights and many sunny days, and at last she had turned on him, mocking his puny struggles, watching the desperate hope which struggled for breath, and quenching the sparks of his life, one by one. Scarp and bluff and rocky ridge took shapes that bowed and gibbered at him; wind whistled elfin cries through the dark. Solitude had never seemed so awful and so relentless until he heard one thin voice piping incoherencies into it and traced that voice back to his own lips. This shock

brought him back for a moment to realisation that he was still walking, although it was many many centuries since Andree died ; many, many centuries since he had had anything to eat. He tried to recollect what had happened to the sled and the two remaining dogs, standing still to steady his reeling brain for the effort. And then O'Hara came near and he hurried on.

Never in all these centuries could he see O'Hara fully. Sometimes he would stop and turn sharply, but the man was always just beyond the edge of eyesight. And yet he never failed to drop in close behind as soon as Dick went on. He was the only thing real in this whirling world of shadows, and presently he ceased to be O'Hara. It was the hound of his self-will and his unbelief and his evil passions which chased him in the shape of O'Hara, and fear lest that hound should catch him lying down kept him on his feet. He threw away his coat, his mitts, everything which meant weight. He did not realise cold or weariness and hunger, and yet he would have fallen down and died a hundred times but for that dogging thing behind him.

It chased him on, reeling and stumbling and muttering ; more afraid of that hound generated by his own sins than he had ever been afraid in his life. Whether days passed or only hours he could not tell. Once he heard his voice calling again, sharpened by the stress of ultimate need.

" Lord have mercy upon us," it said. " Christ have mercy upon us."

They were the old prayers of his boyhood, sounding again from lips and heart long unfamiliar with them. How his small bare knees used to ache on the hard church cushions, and how the bees used to hum in the lilacs beyond the window——

" Lord have mercy upon us. Christ have mercy upon us——"

And then O'Hara came very close to his shoulder, and the nameless dread chased him over a little hill and into a fir coppice where a fire blazed, searing his aching eyes. Then a dog sprang out, and he snatched at it, and fell over it, and lay still.

CHAPTER XXII.

"WHAT ETERNAL CHILDREN WE ARE."

"So you are really going to condescend to know us again," said Hensham.

Dick moved his head irritably. He did not want to be disturbed. This warm peace which flowed through and over every part of him was not a thing which a man parts with lightly. He lay there in an absolute acceptance of contented inertia. Why not? Why not? Dimly he knew that long ago he had submitted body and soul to some great suffering—the fires of hell or the crushing bergs of the Pole. He did not remember which, and it did not matter. They had beaten and refined the evil out of him, and he had come through to some place of laughter and golden sunshine where Tempest was, young and bright-eyed and thrilling still with his ideals; and where Jennifer was, with sweet eyes, no longer sad, but merry, and lips that kissed his eyelids until he saw all things new and beautiful, and that kissed his mouth until he laughed from sheer light-hearted gladness.

Something was disturbing him in that world now, and it made him angry. He set his teeth against the hard thing which continued to thrust itself into his mouth, and at last in suddenly roused wrath he spoke to it.

"Get out of my mouth," he said; and then the hot broth took its swift way down his throat, and his eyes flashed open.

"Ah!" he said, and Hensham laughed as he refilled the spoon.

"Guess that's the proper persuader," he said. "But you must go slow, Heriot. If there's any belief in the divine luck of occurrence you didn't come to our wood-camp to peter out now. But you're weak. Heavens, man, you are weak."

Dick did not care what Hensham thought. He went back into his dreamland when the spoon ceased to empty itself down his throat, and vaguely he sought for the utter peace of it again. But that was not to be. Life was stirring in him now; and when, towards evening, he looked up and spoke, his senses were sharpening. Anderson was on guard; but

he called Hensham, and Hensham came, bringing his strong vigorous presence into the misty greyness which hedged Dick.

"Here's some more soup," said Hensham, and went to work promptly with spoon and bowl. Then he propped Dick with pillows and gave him leave to talk.

"Not that I imagine you'll have much to say just yet," he remarked. "You came pretty near finding us drawing up your epitaph, Heriot. When we heard that you hadn't been seen on the Mackenzie we guessed what had happened."

Dick shut his eyes. The voice was surely friendly; but in this dim light he could not tell what the face was saying, and sheer physical weakness made him afraid to look.

"What—did happen?" he asked slowly.

"Why, I guess you know best." Hensham laughed. "We figured out that the girl ran away from you and you went right after her without coming back for help. I've heard that you always defied Providence when you had a chance. And then—well, you got lost, of course. But I want to know what happened to her?"

"She ran away—she ran away——" Dick tried to remember; but his thoughts were in flux, and he could not get beyond the lead which Hensham's words had given him.

"There!" Hensham spoke triumphantly to someone unseen. "What did I tell you, Baskerville! I said he'd come out with a clean sheet all right. You go to sleep again, Heriot. Lord, he's as weak as a day-old puppy."

The little room shook with the strong tread of life going out from it; and Dick lay still, hovering yet on the edge of that life and unsure if he were man or only spirit. The long starvation and the long suffering had taken more from him than would come back at once, and the memories that drifted through his brain were not acute enough to hurt him. There was the knowledge somewhere that they ought to hurt, that they would hurt, by and by, but there was a strange sense of peace and healing on him now. Words without end or beginning were sliding through his mind. Some of them said: "Can only be bought back by tears—by tears—and the fires that are not quenched." What could only be bought back? He fell asleep over the thought, but when he woke again it was ready for him.

"The simplicity of the heart can only be bought back by tears and terror and the fires that are not quenched."

That was it. But what did it mean to him? Idly he tried to reason the matter, and because thought flowed more coherently now, he acknowledged certain things. Certainly he had sold his simplicity of heart long ago—if he ever had it. For a while his mind slid among memories of the past which

seemed to indicate that he had had it; and drifting out of nowhere came the legend of the old Norse Loke who had the mind of the gods, desiring good, and the heart of the giants, desiring evil. Far away in those dim, childish years, and in the later keener years of boyhood, Dick remembered how those two had always warred in him. He smiled now in a curious pity for that growing fierce-hearted boy who had once been himself. But Loke had cast himself out of Jotunheim in despair at his increasing wickedness. Dick would never need to do that. He had never fully let his heart overrule his mind. He had always kept his work straight and honest. That thought brought him up with a jarring, clattering crash that seemed almost physical. His drowsy content flew to pieces, and with staring, horror-struck eyes he tried to sit up, tried to get out of bed.

The room was dark and still. It was midnight, perhaps, and men were asleep about him; men who knew what he had done, who knew that he had betrayed the last thing which he held sacred; men who knew—thought again jerked him to a full stop. They did not know. Hensham's friendly voice and words conveyed meaning to him now. They did not know, thank God, and they need never know. He lay down again, shivering and feeling the throbbing ache of returning life in all his limbs.

"Thank God, they need not know," he repeated; and then felt with a curious, irritated surprise that the words did not seem to lift the burden in the least. The expression of relief was only a form. But the other words were true. And then, in this hazy, giddy world where he lived now, sense began to twist itself about until he did not know which part were true or which he wanted true. He was too tired, he told himself. Hands and feet and head felt too big for the rest of him. They jumped and throbbed; and he won through the night somehow, sleeping fitfully, and thankful when the morning brought the cheerful Hensham and his breakfast. But Hensham was decidedly awkward this morning, and when the spoon and bowl were put away he sat on the bedside, attempting conversation nervously.

"You—you—I suppose you haven't noticed anything wrong with any part of you—your feet, for instance?" he asked, presumably addressing the wall.

Had he been looking at Dick he would have seen for one instant what no man saw through that which followed. It was the sudden flicker of a deadly fear; but Dick's voice was normal to the somewhat obtuse policeman.

"I can't say that I have. Frost-bite, is it?"

"Well, yes; it is. The left foot. Baskerville—he's H.B. factor, and quite a bit of a doctor—he has been

over-hauling it, and he is very anxious to know if it hurts you at all."

"Ah! Fears mortification, does he?"

Dick was conscious with a sickening certainty that that left foot was just as dead and heavy a thing as the rest of him.

"Well—of course, one can't tell. It's such a little while since you came round, and perhaps—would you like to see him? He told me to send for him any time."

"Thank you. If he is at liberty I might as well. He wants to take it off, I suppose. The H.B. factors have exploited themselves in surgery from immemorable ages."

"Good Heavens! You don't imagine he'd want to do it unless——"

"I never try to imagine other men's thoughts." Dick smiled a little. "Don't look so scared, Hensham. He doesn't want my head, too, does he? Yes; we may as well see him if he has nothing better to do just now."

In the twenty minutes which passed before Hensham brought Baskerville Dick lay motionless, staring at the wall and marshalling his strength. Twice he said through stiff lips "I would rather die," and he knew that he meant it. And a bitter hate surged in him against the luck which had saved him for this. But through the examination following the coming of the grave bearded man to his room he showed far less nervousness than either of the others.

"Yes; the little toe must go," he said when it was over. "But I will hang on to the rest so long as I can, thank you, Baskerville."

"If you'll let me operate at once——"

"This minute if you like. No, I won't take an anesthetic."

When the men left him Dick turned his face to the wall and lay still. At best this meant some permanent crippling. At worst it meant death. His spirit preferred death. But his body could not. He had too much innate vitality, and he knew that he would struggle for life until the last hour overcame him. But just at present he was facing a struggle which went deeper than this.

Dick's manhood had been his fetish, even as his work had been his pride. Because he had never acknowledged this even to himself the feeling was the stronger. It was strong enough to flail him now when he saw where he stood in that clear sight of his. He was a coward and a deserter. He had sinned wilfully; but he dared not bear the shame. He dared not. Tempest had dared; but then Tempest stood in that vague sexless category of saints and martyrs who do these things because they are not exactly men nor women. Dick believed this for three minutes before the bottom fell out of it. Tempest was very thoroughly a man in his tempta-

tion and his fall. He had been very thoroughly a man in his bitter resentment. He was a man, even as Dick. But, as a man, he would not live a lie.

He fought that knowledge through the whole night, forgetting even Jennifer. For the devil in his blood would not die while that blood ran. But his feebleness prevented fever of body or mind, and it kept him sane while he groped slowly toward the light.

"The fact that you have so little blood left in you is your great salvation," said Baskerville one day, and Dick assented with an amused gravity.

His spirit had still enough blood in it to make thinking a very vital thing through those long and lonely days. His thoughts were often necessarily painful and sordid and miserable. He had lived too long in such an atmosphere to struggle out of it easily. But there was an unexpected luminosity about some things now. Since he had seen that light in Andree's dying eyes he knew with that belief which is beyond reason that her fiery, untamed soul was not a thing which death had blown out. Since he had walked so close to the borderland of death himself he began to look on it as a probable development, not an extinction. And if it were possible to believe this thing which he could not prove, then many unprovable things were possible. Day by day as he lay there he thought these puzzles out; mocking at himself often, sinking down into the old sloughs often, and yet finding a strange persevering interest and amusement in recognising some rationality in those things which did not answer to the touchstone of logic, and which he would once have swept away for that reason.

He did not dare let himself think too much of his probable maiming; he was too weak to talk for long at a time, and so he thought, not realising that this was the natural flower from that new growth of charity towards his neighbour which had led him to help Tempest in the first place; to rouse Slicker from his inertia; to attempt rescue of the white baby from Alphonse Michu. To the end of his life he would almost certainly mock more than he would sympathise; but now that the blackest of his trouble was upon him he was losing much of the bitterness which had characterised his whole life. It seemed as if through recognising his weakness he was at last gaining inner strength. Even Hensham's noisy rejoicing over the fact that Dick would not have to lose his foot did not rouse that caustic tongue. But Dick's heart knew that to drag a useless member through life would be little better than to lose it. And no man could tell yet if that would be so or not.

And then, one day, the test of all which he had been learning

and thinking came on him suddenly with Hensham's announcement that a trader was going up to the South next day.

"He can be trusted to take letters," said Hensham. "I'm sending some, and of course you'll want to send a line to your folks."

Dick's smile was bitter for a moment. His folks had forgotten him long ago.

"Thanks," he said. "I must write Regina, anyway. It will be months yet before I can travel."

"I'm afraid so. Of course it's awfully jolly for us having you here, and I really do believe that foot will get fairly right, you know. You are a trump of a patient, Heriot. I'd be growling and cursing about it all day."

Dick's lips twitched a little. Perhaps some day Hensham would learn that there are things which go too deep for outside comment.

"You'd probably bundle me out if I did," he said. "I might as well write now, before Baskerville comes to do my foot."

"Of course I've put this business in my report," said Hensham. "I wish we had been able to find that poor girl's body, you know. I guess I'd be glad to know that she was properly buried. Of course we haven't a notion how many days you travelled after you'd left her. If you'd been keeping your diary to the last as young Grahame did——"

"Yes. It was an oversight, wasn't it? You might hand me the pen and paper. Thanks."

For a little while after Hensham had gone he sat still with his lips set and his eyes unusually sad and soft. He knew what he was going to write. He had come to the decision through too fierce a fight not to know it. And he was not coward enough to retract now. But a little shudder ran through him as he took up the pen. He was going to do the hardest thing that his life had demanded of him yet. He wrote a short letter to the Commissioner, and a long one to Jennifer. But the gist of both was the same. He made a full confession of the betrayal of his trust; he expressed repentance, and he did not ask for mercy. The letters were sealed and lying on the table when Hensham came back, and the vigorous young fellow exclaimed at the white tired face.

"I say! You're fagged out, Heriot. I should have come in before. I'm so sorry."

"You're a good chap, Hensham." There was no mockery in Dick's smile just now. "I'll have to pass all you've done for me on to the next man, for you don't look a fit subject for medical administrations."

"I've done nothing." Hensham reddened. "You—you're so awfully brickish about it all, you know."

"Am I? That's an unusual accusation. Yes; those are the letters. You can stamp them? Thanks."

He watched them go with a curious half-wonder in his eyes. Why should he feel relief at having done a thing which was probably going to damn him in the eyes of the world? What had taught him that if a man puts himself right with himself he can afford to face what that world may say? And why was it putting him right with himself to do a foolish and quixotic thing?

Baskerville came in and interrupted his meditations; and Dick, with a sudden swing of the pendulum, said several unusually nasty things to him. But Baskerville met them with the tolerance one shows a man who may be crippled for life. Dick understood the reason, and it did not sweeten his temper. Natural reaction had set in, and he spent a wretched night. But he did not ask for the letters back again. His weaknesses seldom took the form of retraction in any way. Through the following weeks and months that grew to spring he never thought once of making confession to Hensham. This was not Hensham's business, nor the business of any save the two who would know by now, and Dick was not the man to fling himself to penitential extremes.

Careful nursing and time brought power back to the maimed foot, little by little. But the ice was gone and the canoes were on the river before Dick went south again. He took Indians with him from post to post, leaving the last one at Simpson, and paddling the long stage into Fort Resolution alone. He had known long since that Tempest was in charge of the Mackenzie District now; and he had heard from the steamer, which he met near Simpson, that letters were waiting him in Tempest's care. Those letters haunted the day and the night for him now. Dear though Jennifer was to him, much though she meant and always would mean in his life, he knew that no possible tenderness of hers could quite atone for the public disgrace which might fall on him. And for more than the disgrace—for the pain and the heartache it would be to him to know the North no more.

For all she had given him to bear his heart glowed yet with love for this great sweeping space of Northland. Her wild and lavish glory of young summer stirred the undying wild youth in himself. He could never leave her without a heartbreak. But he knew that he would never come back if his dishonour had gone down these mighty rivers before him. On the last evening before he reached Fort Resolution he camped in a spruce clump redolent with piny odours, and with an outlook upon the lake. The turquoise and raw gold of the quivering sunset across that rimless reach of faintly rolling water seemed more glorious than he had ever seen it before. His own life

was just as horizonless at present and there was none of that beauty in it, and yet there was a new-sprung hope and pleasure in him that used not to be there. He was hoping because he dared not do anything else. He was trying to believe because he dared not do anything else. And this is really the one and only reason which makes a man in earnest.

Lulled there in the lap of that great silence with only his pipe for company, the radiance of the sunset held more meaning, the brooding calm of the deepening sky held more, the occasional scuffling and splash of the ducks in the reeds held more. He seemed to have stumbled on some new understanding and comradeship with that mighty Life which pulsed through everything, and yet he could not tell how and where he felt in touch with it. But he carried a courageous heart into Fort Resolution next day, and he received his letters and the news that Tempest would be back in a couple of hours with a like serenity. Then, because he dared not read those letters out in the breezy day with the sunlight dancing on the lake and all the wildwood scents loose about him, he took them into Tempest's little sitting-room, and shut the door, and sat down in Tempest's chair to read them.

He sat still for very long after they were read, and he was sitting there still when he heard Tempest's voice in the passage.

"What? In there, is he? Very well. Yes. I'll call you when I want you, Bernard."

Dick stood up, thrusting the letters into his pocket. He heard Tempest's step, and both step and voice seemed to bear the eager ring of the old days. Then Tempest swung the door open, and came in swiftly.

"My word, I am glad to see you, old man," he said.

The grip of the hand told it, and the half-break in the voice. Then Tempest stood back, laughing half-nervously.

"They've managed to put some flesh on you again down at Macpherson," he said. "You're not eligible for our 'Dolce et decorum' roll-call yet."

Dick winced. This was touching on the sore place already.

"Macpherson must share her honours," he said. "Young Grahame was offered up on her altar."

"Yes. Sad thing that. Sit down, and let me look at you. Fit? I should think I was. No time to be anything else up here."

He talked cheerfully, with much of the old buoyancy back in his manner and words. But it had a deeper note and a greater gravity at times, and there were some threads of grey in his thick hair. It was Dick who spoke of his lameness because he had seen the contraction of Tempest's forehead when he limped to his chair.

"It will be permanent," he said. "But there is no pain now."

"It won't incapacitate you for duty?"

"No." Dick's smile was peculiar. "I don't expect that to incapacitate me for duty."

For a while longer they talked of other things. Then Tempest said:

"Now tell me about Andree, please."

He was silent while Dick gave such particulars as would not pain Tempest too much. Then he added: "I think she did not suffer at the last. She died in my arms, and her eyes were glorious when I closed them."

"She loved you to the last, Dick?"

"Yes."

There was a pause. Then Tempest said, quietly:

"Thank you. I think I am glad to know that. It would make her happy just to be with you. And yet—they said she ran away from you."

"She did. But that was not the beginning. I ran away with her first, Tempest."

"You did what?"

"I was taking her out to Dawson City. Wait a minute! I changed my mind and tried to bring her back. I suppose I was rather brutal to her, and she ran away from me. There is no need for you to make any comment on this. Don't imagine that I have lost all sense of proportion because I have so nearly lost everything else."

Tempest sprang up and began to walk through the room. It was his old habit when in strong agitation, and Dick sat still, staring at the floor. He did not know that he had meant to tell Tempest. Now he saw that it could not have been otherwise. He owed Andree's ever-true lover that. Presently he said:

"I should like to tell you one reason why I nearly did that thing. But I cannot."

"I know." Tempest halted in his walk. "It was because Mrs. Ducane sent you away."

"You——" Dick's oath was hot and quick. "What do you know about that?"

"Mrs. Ducane told me, Dick."

"She told you?"

"She knew that I was dreading this very thing; and she told me that it would not be, and she told me why she was sure of it."

He continued to walk the room, and Dick's eyes went back to the floor. This hurt more than he had expected to be hurt again. It was Tempest who spoke next.

"I have no right to blame any man when I have been so

far from blameless myself. If I had been less hard to you it might have helped you."

"I deserved all I got there. It would have helped, though. You and Jennifer were too good and too far-off for me." He shrugged his shoulders with a slight laugh. "But I had to come back to you," he said.

Tempest did not ask what had brought him back. That was Dick's own arrangement with his God—if he had one.

"And you have the right to come back now," he said. "Did you know that Ducane is dead?"

"I have had a letter from her telling me. I wrote her from Macpherson." It was Tempest's silence drew the next words out of him. "She is waiting at Grey Wolf until I come. It rather frightens one to know how much a woman can forgive."

"So long as you stay frightened you'll be all right," said Tempest dryly. Then he came over, standing close by Dick's chair.

"I am a brute to say such things to you," he said with his old impetuosity. "You saved me, and nearly lost yourself over doing it. That should make us quits. You didn't know what was going to come out of it."

"I don't know that I cared, after the first. And you have surely more humour than to make apologies to me." Dick pushed his chair back, and stood up. "I think you're wanted. Someone has been perambulating the passage and coughing discreetly for the last three minutes."

Tempest turned to the door. But he looked back.

"You'll give me all the days you can spare, won't you, Dick?" he asked.

"I shall be glad to," said Dick briefly.

But under the bald words both men felt the pull of that old bond of friendship again. It was not broken, and it would not break now. Dick knew this certainly as he went out to smoke a pipe along the sunny beach, and he felt surprisedly that he was glad, really glad, although joy and he had been strangers so long. Even Jennifer's letter had not made him glad, for its sweet, unreproachful wisdom had humbled him into the dust. And the Commissioner's letter had not made him glad. It had made him thankful. He smiled a little, thinking of it. There was quite evidently something of the woman in the Commissioner too. Or perhaps it was because he had had such a very large acquaintance with men for so many years that he was prepared for everything. Or it may have been that he set undue value on the fact that one of those men had confessed a fault which he so easily might have suppressed. Whatever the reason it seemed more likely that Dick would find a friend at Regina, in place of the judge he

expected. A sudden twist of his ever-nimble brain suggested that it might be the same at the end of that longer journey which he was taking. But here he shrugged his shoulders with a laugh of half-contempt. Those kinds of thoughts and his nature were so ridiculously at variance. It must be, of course, because he was thinking more of Jennifer than usual. Behind the blowing smoke-cloud his eyes softened.

"If only I could bring her more," he said, under his breath. "If I could bring her more for all she has to give me. But a man can't waste his years and his heart and his soul for nothing. I haven't got it to give now."

Something of this was touched on a few nights later when Dick and Tempest walked the dreaming beach under the stars. They would part in the morning, and it would quite probably be long before they met again; and this knowledge, and the haunting beauty and loneliness of the wide lake loosened their tongues a little, so that, hesitatingly and with many pauses, they spoke more intimately than they had done since the days of their fiery youth. Even better than Dick Tempest knew that the human soul is a shy wild thing which often cannot give where it most desires to give. But, by putting something of man's natural reserve aside, his intuitive skill led him to make some confessions in order to gain them. And by slow degrees he did gain them, until Dick was sufficiently softened to speak of his remorse. But here Tempest stopped him.

"We were both to blame," he said. "Which is, I suppose, much the same as saying we are both human. But my sin was worse than yours because I knew that I was wrong. Almost from the beginning I knew it; but I went on 'in spite of Hell.' Well—you gave me Hell, and I've got out of it." He glanced at Dick with a whimsical smile. "Your methods were not gentle. But I want you to believe that I sincerely think I could have forgiven anything you did to myself only without very much effort, Dick."

"I would not have had you forgive the other easily," said Dick sharply.

The long silence which followed was broken by Dick.

"I shall probably be married very soon if I can get permission from the Commissioner. Ducane has been dead eight months, and I am due for leave. I didn't take it when I re-enlisted four years ago."

"Ah! Then your term is up next year?"

"I know. But I shall join again if I am allowed. I can't settle to any other life now. I have knocked about too long."

"Is that—will that be fair on—on——"

"No!" Dick's laugh held a sting of bitterness. "Have I ever been fair to her or anyone else? But it is inevitable,

and she recognises that. Do you remember what some poet says about Hercules? He fell into all sorts of evils if he didn't have the chance to sweat his soul out occasionally at honest hard work. Not that I compare myself to the god in any other way; but I do understand the common-sense of that. My nature will always be too strong for me if I can't find manual work enough to keep it down. She'll help—Jennifer will. But she can't do it all. It is part of the penalty, I suppose, that I shall never be able to settle down into a comfortable fat father and husband as you could. Oh—I never meant——"

"It's all right. Don't imagine that that hurts now, Dick. I am not a child to spend my life crying over what I can't have. I think I would have been rather glad to—to follow your example. I thought about it when I went East, and I —well, I tried. But I saw that, whoever the woman might be, she would take such a very third-class place behind my work and my country that it would have been dishonourable to ask her."

"You have more conscience than I have, Tempest."

"No. I have merely centred my interests where you have always wanted them to be—where I had thought I wanted them to be myself. A man can do little, perhaps. But the utmost which he can give will be asked of him. That is the great consolation."

"You'll do more than a little, old chap."

"I hope so." Tempest's eyes shone suddenly, and his voice rang. "Lord! What eternal children we are! We'll build our mud-heaps to raise us up to conquer the stars until the end of time, never heeding how often they crumble under us." He laid his hand on Dick's shoulder. "Whatever you did or meant to do to me I owe it to you that I have taken hold of things again," he said. "I can't see yet what it is all for. I can't see why the innocent should suffer for the guilty, or why self should be such an eternal devil to fight. There seems injustice somewhere. But perhaps I'll see clearer in time. Till I do I'll—go on building mud-heaps."

"And when you do you'll conquer the stars."

But Dick's raillery was very friendly, for the boyishness, which would never die out of Tempest, touched the younger man, who was so infinitely older in many ways. And for an hour yet they smoked their pipes as they kept step up and down the beach and spoke of many things. But they did not touch on those private subjects again; and their words and their good-byes were casual on the shore in the morning when the breed in the stern of Dick's canoe held it against the bank, and Dick turned for a moment to give his hand to Tempest.

They did not weaken that hand-grip with words, although Dick had a jest for his lame foot as he clambered into the canoe. He turned once to see Tempest straight and tall on the shore. Then he went on paddling with slow, long strokes and the tobacco-smoke blowing out either side him. Tempest watched until the dazzle of light on the water hid him and the entrance to the Great Slave River lay near. Then he went along the beach, and flung himself down on the sand, looking out to the shoreless lake that ran blue against the blue sky. His eternal duties would call him up presently, and next week he would start his long patrol to the North by the ways up which Dick had come. But this warm golden hour of silence between earth and Heaven was his own.

Cicadas were chirping, and all across the lake sea-birds dipped and called. The air was full of the healthy smell from little far-off fires, and the light breeze helped his pipe to keep off the mosquitoes. He lay on his back, staring up into the blue, which seemed to recede and deepen, drawing his thoughts up with it. And his mind turned again to that inexplicable secret of the universe which so puzzled him and which he so struggled to interpret. For all Dick's cynical, clear-sighted unbelief he believed that Dick was nearer the solution than himself. But Dick had Jennifer to help him. Tempest had to find his way along a lonely road. And why should that be so? Why should one man have and another man lose? Why should evil trip the feet up on the very altar-steps? Why should doubt be born of belief and belief of doubt? Why, and why, and again, why? Where was the reason of it all?

An ant ran up his hand, and he raised it to watch as the little thing darted this way and that, afraid to make excursions up his arm, afraid to drop over into the unknown. It rested at last, accepting the inevitable and trusting in the fortune which had guided it so far. Tempest lowered his hand and let it run off into the sand. He had found the first word of that interpretation which he sought, and it was one which had been about him all the time. That word was Faith, and by the very nature of it he knew that it would be the only one which he and his generation—and perhaps many generations after him—would learn. And by its very nature it gave rich promise of other words, other revelations to be understood when the first was fully mastered. Then, and not until then, would come the progression, even as our forefathers progressed from arrows to knives and from verbal to written speech. Faith, not blind and stupid, but Faith completely equipped and strong and eager for the next step. In some strange way Dick's unbelief had come to an acceptance of a faith of some sort. Tempest's years of belief had found it more difficult.

Tempest believed that he could interpret that. In his weariness the beggared heart in Dick had turned gratefully to the crumbs which fell from the table, where Tempest in his pride and impatience had demanded cake.

One white line of cloud drew itself delicately across the curve of blue, and the sun-warmth soaked into him as he lay. His thought went back to the ant. That ant could not understand why Tempest lifted it up, nor why he put it down again. Supposing that he was expecting information on subjects which he was as little capable of understanding? All over this great humming world lives were being born, lives were dying, with every breath he drew. What other equipment could avail man against that reeling knowledge but Faith? Faith that his God held the ends of every tangled skein; faith that when he too was able to understand he should understand; faith that the submissive acceptance of Faith as ultimate was the one way of growing beyond it. It would not be for Tempest to discover his Great Secret this side the stars, although, by his life, he might help secure the discovery to later generations. As he lay there a strange, peaceful sense of fatherhood towards the future, of sonhood towards the past, came over him. As his progenitors, the Cavemen, had worked through their descendants out of blind animal terrors and ignorance, so the men that should come after Tempest might work to heights now unguessed at by him. Whether he knew or not would not matter. He knew now. He knew that he and all men had their glorious infinitesimal part in the moulding of the future. For the fact that man may not live to himself alone is at once the redemption and the temptation of mankind.

He got up at last and walked back to the barracks. Through long tangled ways he had returned to the truth which a child learns at its mother's knee. But he had won it for himself now, and therefore it was precious as it could never have been before. It might not make life easier, perhaps, because life is not meant to be easy. It might not make him very good, because man is not meant to be very good. He is meant to stay human enough to sympathise with other men. But he had got a solid base at last on which to build his mud-heaps.

Before him the great lake rolled to rightward and the great plains rolled to left. The sun was warm and hazily golden over both, and a faint blue veined the distance. There was the smell of rain and of quickening earth in the air; and a few duck flew over, making no sound, but striking the note of life into the far-spreading peace.

Tempest stood still to watch them go. Then he looked out across the land which was so dear to him with the old

light shining in his eyes. His right hand was closed, as the hand of a man who grasps a rapier-hilt. Presently he spoke,

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light shining in his eyes. His right hand was closed, as the hand of a man who grasps a rapier-hilt. Presently he spoke, with a half laugh and a half break of love in the words.

"To love you isn't enough," he said. "God grant we're ready to suffer and work for you—Canada."

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